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The Representation of Chivalric Ideals in Twelfth-Century Northern France

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Abstract

This study explores the ideological, political, and social significance of chivalric ideals in twelfth-century northern France, by examining in detail the representation of key chivalric ideals and institutions in a wide range of contemporary texts linked to the dynamic courts of Champagne and Flanders. These include chivalric romances, chronicles, letters, sermons, and treatises.

The first chapter tests the significance of the court as a symbol of chivalry and a focal point for the promotion of chivalric values. In the process, it uncovers some surprising similarities between chivalric romances and court satire.

Chapter Two, on the tournament, juxtaposes conflicting representations of tournaments, exploring the factors which caused this division, and assessing the power of the tournament as a chivalric institution.

The chivalric ideal of *largesse* is explored in chapter three, which reveals that while *largesse* was a prominent virtue of nobles, acts of giving - even in chivalric romances - were underpinned by an awareness of political and economic issues, and an expectation of return. *Largesse* is the noble alternative to a purely commercial economy.

Chapter Four investigates the noble ideal of hospitality, examining the conflicts generated by the secularisation of hospitality in the twelfth century, by comparing it with religious traditions, and exploring its social and political ramifications.

The final chapter considers the significance of unchivalrous behaviour by investigating acts of villainy in chivalric romances, chronicles, and contemporary law. It reveals a high degree of correlation in attitudes to villainy, and exposes some striking parallels between chivalric romances and twelfth-century law.

The comparative study of different discourses of chivalry locates ideals of chivalry firmly within the ideologies and practices of the nobles of twelfth-century northern France. It brings to light correspondences between literary and historical texts, and shows how chivalric ideals engaged with, and also generated, contemporary debate.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to express my indebtedness to Dr Ad Putter and Dr Marcus Bull of the University of Bristol, who have shared with me their expertise and their enthusiasm throughout the writing of this work. Their contributions have been of immeasurable value.

I am extremely grateful to Mr Dennis Trudgill for his financial support, which was bestowed freely and with true generosity. I am also grateful to the Alumni Foundation at Bristol University, and the inter-library-loans staff at the University Library.

My thanks are due to Mark, and to my family and friends, for being prepared to talk about chivalry, and for refusing to talk about chivalry. This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Mo and Terry, without whose *largesse* it could not have been written. I can only hope that the completed work goes some way toward providing a sense of remuneration.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The thesis has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed: _____ Date: 7/8/01

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Abbreviations

CFMA	Classiques Français du Moyen Âge
Kibler	W.W.Kibler (trans.), *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances* (London, 1991)
MGH SS	Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores
PL	Patrologia cursus completus, series latina, ed. J-P.Migne *et al*
RHGF	Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France, ed. M.Bouquet *et al*, 24 vols. (Paris, 1869-1904)
RS	Rolls Series

Introduction

'Chivalry' is a loaded term. The word *chevalier* originally described a mounted warrior, and *chevalerie* could be used to describe the attributes of such a warrior. Yet in the twelfth century, *chevalerie* came to adopt a specifically ethical significance, denoting a set of values appropriate to knights which distinguished them from other social groups. This work examines some ideological, social, and political significances of these values. While many of the ideals which are defined as chivalrous, such as honour, loyalty, and *largesse* actually predate the twelfth century, it was at this time that these virtues became specifically linked to a sense of knightly vocation. By exploring key institutions and ideals of chivalry, this study aims to assess how far each of these engaged with contemporary political, economic, and social tensions, and the extent to which they contributed to the sense of identity and the power of the knightly classes in the twelfth century.

The popularity of chivalric studies is reflected in the number and range of academic works which have been produced over the years.[1] Yet while such studies have provided valuable contributions to the field, there remain today certain generalised and inaccurate assumptions about chivalry. The question of how high moral and aesthetic values could be upheld by a class whose very role

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[1] Classic works in the field include: L.Gautier, *Chivalry,* ed. J.Levron, trans. D.C.Dunning (London, 1965); S.Painter, *French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1940); G.Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. C.Postan (London, 1977); J.Flori, *L'Essor de la chevalerie* (Geneva, 1986); Flori, *L'Idéologie du Glaive: Préhistoire de la chevalerie* (Geneva, 1983); M.Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984).

involved warfare can lead to the conclusion that chivalry was a form of idealism which had little or no bearing on real life.[2] I wish to argue that one of the reasons for this problem lies in our conceptual approach to the term itself. 'Chivalry' and other medieval terms have come to us as abstract concepts, divorced from their political and social contexts. We no longer have an awareness of the complexities of meaning which were attached to the term *chevalerie*, and there is a danger that we 'mystify' a term which at the time was anchored in social practices.[3]

My contention is therefore that 'chivalry' did not exist *per se* as a fixed ideal, but rather that *chivalric ideals* were deeply embedded in the social practices of their time, and as such often contentious and contested. It is important not to equate 'ideology' with 'idealistic' in studies of this nature, as has too often been the case in the field of chivalric studies.[4] By determining at least the ways in which people interpret and react to the world, ideologies inform actions and vice versa. Furthermore, social codes are not static: they are constantly defined and modified, revealing tensions and reflecting, and sometimes recommending, social change. This study conducts an analysis of chivalric ideals and institutions which locates them within the ideological

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[2] 'This illusion of society based on chivalry curiously clashed with the reality of things ... By this traditional fiction they succeeded in explaining to themselves, as well as they could, the motives and the course of history': J.Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, 1955), pp.67-8.

[3] 'Any over-all term for motivation, such as honor, loyalty, liberty, equality, fraternity, is a *summing up* of many motivational strands': K.Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, 1969), pp.90-112 (110).

[4] For example, 'courtly culture gives rise to the idea ... that nobility, greatness, and intrinsic values have nothing in common with everyday reality': E.Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W.R.Trask (Princeton, 1953), p.122.

framework which went some way to informing knights' perceptions and experiences of the world. Furthermore it complicates the application of absolute terms such as 'church' and 'state', preferring to approach the relationships between secular and religious members of twelfth-century society as complex, and exploring the extent to which these dialogues came together, for each of the five chosen themes.

A contextual study of attitudes to chivalry has been further restricted by the traditional division of academic disciplines, which has separated scholars of 'history' and 'literature' in a way which has placed unnecessary limitations on the selection and analysis of primary sources. Such distinctions are particularly inappropriate in the study of medieval society, as history and fiction were not necessarily perceived as mutually exclusive entities. Even written histories are influenced by literary traditions, and should be seen as a form of narrative.[5] Moreover, the use of rhetoric in these texts does not negate their potential exemplary role, or obscure their value as representations of social realities and contemporary belief systems.[6] A comparative study of a range of contemporary genres allows us to steer away from the generalised historical perspectives of

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[5] For more on medieval attitudes to history and story see: S.Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory*, 22 (1983), pp.278-310; G.M.Spiegel, 'Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative', *History and Theory*, 22 (1983), pp.43-53; Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. and trans. M.R.James, rev. C.N.L.Brooke and R.A.B.Mynors (Oxford, 1983), pp.xli-ii; L.Carasso-Bulow, *The Merveilleux in Chrétien de Troyes' Romances* (Geneva, 1976), pp.23-8.

[6] Spiegel argues that the inclusion in histories of rhetoric and myth, and other stylistic and methodological 'weaknesses' of many historical accounts identified by modern scholars, were in fact a part of the mimetic purpose in the mind of their writers, whose task included the incorporation of previous records: 'Genealogy', pp.43-53. Fictionality is in fact an issue among romance writers, who often make mention of the 'source book' of a story in order to lend support to its authenticity.

some literary scholars, while detailed textual analysis ensures that historical texts are not treated as disinterested sources of information.

Chivalric romances in particular have suffered from the methodological approaches of previous scholars. The tendency of some earlier studies to treat chivalric romances as uncontested mirrors of knightly life was countered by a new trend, which was reluctant to use them at all, in the belief that their fictional basis renders them totally unsuitable as evidence for knightly ideals and practices.[7] Yet in the twelfth century, chivalric romances became the favourite medium for story-telling at the court and were patronised by the leading political figures of northern France. Chronicles and chivalric romances refer alike to legendary and historical figures, sometimes linking the names of King Arthur or Alexander the Great with contemporary figures such as the counts of Flanders and Champagne. As this study will show, discourses on chivalric ideals involved a variety of individuals and social groups, and their expression spanned a wide range of genres. This study assumes that the writers of chivalric romances,

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[7] 'Romance is not a safe guide to the realities of twelfth- and thirteenth-century knighthood': P.Noble, 'Perversion of an Ideal', *Medieval Knighthood*, IV (1992), pp.177-86. Auerbach argued that due to their elements of fantasy, and their elevation of the status of knights, chivalric romances reflected the decline in realism of literary texts, and that it was the detachability from reality of the romances which gave them their appeal: 'the courtly romance is not reality shaped and set forth by art, but an escape into fable and fairy tale': *Mimesis*, pp.107-24 (119-20); see also Carasso-Bulow, *The Merveilleux*, esp.pp.23-8. But a counter-argument asserts the positive function of chivalric romances as a vehicle for the expression of contemporary social beliefs, processes and problems: 'Chrétien's Arthurian romances do not aspire to recuperate an idealized feudal community ... nor do they exemplify ... a mechanism for courtly chivalric perfection': D.Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions* (Cambridge, 1991), p.139. On this issue, see also: E.Köhler, 'Le rôle de la "coutume" dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes', *Romania*, 81 (1960), pp.386-97; Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der Höfischer Epik* (Tübingen, 1956), trans. E.Kaufholz, *L'Avanture Chevaleresque: idéal et réalisté dans le roman courtois* (Paris, 1974); R.H.Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley, 1977).

chronicles, letters, and sermons, absorbed something of their historical context into their narratives, and that by exploring these texts we can enhance our understanding of the ideological and social significance of chivalric values.[8] It is therefore important to explore how these texts referred to ideals and institutions of chivalry, and how they encouraged identification with these values.

Another danger of dealing with chivalry as a free-floating ideology is that evidence from very different geographical and social areas, and even from several different centuries, may be pushed together with no real attempt to analyse the specific intellectual, political, and economic context in which ideals of chivalry were expressed. The aim of this study is to provide a detailed contextual analysis of chivalric ideals which offers both scope and specificity. The history of twelfth-century northern France is characterised by an increase in land reclamation, an increase in population, and economic boom, which resulted in the highly successful international trade fairs of Champagne and Flanders.[9] After the collapse of the Carolingian Empire, power became fragmented, and much of France was effectively governed by its nobles. The counts of Champagne and Flanders thus enjoyed a peculiar degree of political and judicial power during the twelfth century, and it was during their leadership, in a time of

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[8] C.S.Jaeger outlines the need for such an approach: 'Courtliness and Social Change', in T.N.Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp.287-309. See also the appraisal of previous traditions of criticism, by J.Kellogg, *Medieval Artistry and Exchange: Economic Institutions, Society, and Literary Form in Old French Narrative*, American University Studies, Series II, 123 (New York, 1989), pp.3-11.

[9] D.Nicholas, *Medieval Flanders* (London, 1992); M.Bur, *La formation du comté du Champagne, v.950-v.1150* (Nancy, 1977); E.Chapin, *Les Villes de Foires de Champagne: les origines au début du XIV^e siècle* (Paris, 1937); N.J.G.Pounds, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe* (London, 1974), pp.106-110, pp.357-64.

cultural 'renaissance', that values of chivalry flourished.[10] This study considers the representation of key chivalric institutions and ideals in an integrated study of different genres which were linked to these courts of Champagne and Flanders.

A great many of the texts studied were written specifically for the counts of these courts. For example, the chivalric romances *Le Conte du Graal* and *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, written by the the so-called 'father of romance' Chrétien de Troyes, which feature frequently in this thesis, were patronised by Count Philip of Flanders and Marie of Champagne, wife of Count Henry I of Champagne, respectively.[11] The works of Chrétien de Troyes's continuators are also studied, along with other poets contemporary with Chrétien de Troyes who travelled in the same court circles.

While this study employs a large amount of chivalric romance material, it seeks to test the historicity of romances by setting them alongside comparative material from chronicles, letters, biographies, treatises and sermons.[12] Principal chronicle works of the twelfth century include the *Historia comitum Ghisnensium* of Lambert of Ardres, and the *Chronicon Hanoniense* of Gislebert of Mons, which provide useful information about relevant events in the lives of

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[10] C.H.Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927); R.N.Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester, 1999).

[11] The 44 surviving manuscripts which contain Chrétien de Troyes's works, most of which are Northern French and date from around 1275-1325 (and eleven of which have one or more of the Continuations), are a clear indication of the popularity of his works: S.Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment: Rereadings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes* (Chicago, 1994), p.2.

[12] For the ease of the reader, I have followed citations in the original Latin or Old French with English translations, where these are readily available.

key historical figures. While twelfth-century northern France recommends itself as the time and place of the birth and growth of chivalric ideals,[13] the dissemination of ideologies is a constant process, and ideologies of chivalry are no exception. The emphasis remains on the selection and systematic study of a wide range of comparative discourses. Most of the works studied are concentrated in the period from the latter part of the twelfth century into the early thirteenth century, although occasionally relevant texts which fall slightly outside these geographical or temporal boundaries have been used where they can make an important contribution to the study.

In such cases the texts were either directly connected to the courts of northern France, or are connected by their ideas which clearly found expression in the twelfth century. The account by Galbert of Bruges of the assassination of Count Charles of Flanders in 1127 allows us to explore examples of trends which continued to develop as the twelfth century progressed. Classical works are used as a basis for exploring the origins of some ideologies, and also to illustrate the distinguishing features of ideologies which in the twelfth century were seen to be specifically chivalric. A number of Anglo-Norman texts are also employed. Works such as the *De Nugis Curialium* of Walter Map, the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury, and numerous works by Gerald of Wales, can be linked to the courts of northern France through the lives of their educated authors, and through their subject matter.

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[13] The influence of the ethical connotations of chivalry in northern and in southern France was fundamentally different: L.M.Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c.1100-c.1300* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.62-89.

For the sake of clarity it is worth briefly discussing the use of the term 'noble' in this thesis. Such terms are notoriously difficult to define, and the distinction between 'noble' and 'non-noble' was not always clearly delineated.[14] *Nobilitas* could be determined by a number of different factors, including birth, wealth and status, and disposition.[15] Twelfth-century northern France saw an expansion of the noble classes, with a notable increase in the power of the knightly classes as they rose in status to meet the traditional aristocratic families.[16] Where I use the term 'noble' it can be understood to embrace the group of counts, knights, and secular and religious clerics who had contact with the aristocratic courts of the twelfth century. The relative importance of status and virtuous behaviour is discussed at several points in the thesis, and a key question is whether chivalric ideals functioned as values that bolstered the sense of knightly power, and increased their sense of identity as a distinctive social group, in opposition to the lower classes and the monarchy.

The thesis is divided into five chapters, each of which considers the social and ideological significance of a central chivalric institution or ideal. The first two chapters deal with two key chivalric institutions: the court, and the tournament. Chapters three and four are each concerned with a specific chivalric ideal (*largesse* and hospitality respectively), and the final chapter considers the

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[14] On the issue of nobility, see T.Evergates, 'Nobles and Knights in Twelfth-Century France', in Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power*, pp.11-35; Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, pp. 59-80, 94-111, 112-22, 158-70; Flori, *L'Essor*, pp.54-113; E.Warlop, *The Flemish Nobility before 1300*, 4 vols (Courtrai, 1975-6), I, cc.1-3.

[15] C.B.Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave and Noble: Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1998), pp.2-10.

[16] T.Evergates, *Feudal Society in the Bailliage of Troyes under the Counts of Champagne, 1152-1284* (Baltimore, 1975), p.126.

anti-values of chivalry, in a study of 'villainy'. The aims of each chapter are outlined below.

1. The court was the centre of noble life in twelfth-century northern France. As well as being important political centres, courts also provided an environment for the development of cultural values and the production and dissemination of texts.[17] The first chapter examines the court as a symbolic centre of chivalry, beginning by investigating the social and political importance of chivalric rituals at the court as represented in chronicles and chivalric romances. Emerging evidence of rivalry between court members is explored further in the second section, which investigates negative representations of the court and its knights. To test the historicity of representations of the court in romance, I shall use as a comparative base the genre of court satire, which interestingly flourished at the same time as romance, in the twelfth century. The role of the court as a place for the teaching and dissemination of chivalric ideals is then tested in a study of the education of young nobles at court, the reputations for learnedness and chivalry enjoyed by key court figures, and the use and availability of relevant texts at court.

2. The tournament is the second chivalric institution to be considered. Tournaments flourished in northern France in the twelfth century, and yet the representation of tournaments in primary sources is extremely mixed, ranging

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[17] J.F.Benton, 'The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center', *Speculum*, 36 (1961), pp.551-91, repr. in *Culture, Power and Personality in Medieval France*, ed. T.N.Bisson (London, 1991); M.D.Stanger, 'Literary Patronage at the Medieval Court of Flanders', *French Studies*, 11 (1957), pp.214-229. Different intellectual traditions met at court: R.R.Bezzola, *Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en occident* (Paris, 1960), 2.i, p.129.

from outright admiration to absolute condemnation. A study of this key chivalric institution provides a useful way of analysing apparently conflicting voices about chivalry, and testing how the agendas of different social groups are given voice in their representations of tournaments, and whether tournaments served to bolster the identity of knights.[18] Texts in which tournaments are criticised, including the sermons of Jacques de Vitry and Humbert of Romans, are set against celebratory accounts of tournaments in chivalric romances and chronicles.

3. The chivalric ideal of *largesse* is the subject of the third chapter. This chapter analyses the ideological, political, and economic ramifications of the chivalric virtue of *largesse*. It looks first at the ideologies of *largesse* which existed in the twelfth century, exploring the adaptation of theories about gift-giving to the knightly classes, by comparing them with classical sources. The second section considers episodes of gift-giving between knights in chronicles and chivalric romances, and then compares these secular acts of gift-giving with the giving of gifts to religious houses, as expressed in the charters of religious establishments, in order to assess the relative influence of ideological and political factors on acts of *largesse*. The third section examines further the mechanisms of knightly *largesse*, in a detailed study of the cyclical patterns of gift-giving in chivalric romances, and a consideration of the economic dependence of knights on gifts. It seeks to determine whether this chivalric ideal

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[18] Chivalric romances take on the problems of the threatened role of warriors, which had previously been voiced in the epics: Kellogg, *Medieval Artistry and Exchange,* pp.1-2.

was promoted as an alternative doctrine for knights in resistance to the growth of capitalist values, as suggested by some scholars,[19] and how far it contributed to the sense of knightly identity in opposition to the rising merchant classes.

4. A second key chivalric virtue, hospitality, is explored in the fourth chapter. Hospitality is another virtue which predated the full development of the ideals of chivalry, but which became an important noble value in the twelfth century. Exploring the emergence of hospitality as a chivalric virtue allows us to understand further the areas of similarity or disparity in religious and secular voices, and contributes to our understanding of the wider influence of chivalric ideals. The chapter begins by comparing representations of the ideology of hospitality in religious and didactic texts which were popular in the twelfth century, including the *Rule of Saint Benedict* and courtesy books. It then explores the social and political ramifications of acts of hospitality, via episodes of hospitality described in chronicles and chivalric romances. Finally it explores the conflict which was generated by the meeting of religious ideologies of hospitality with secular values, as expressed in these texts.

5. 'Villainy', or anti-chivalry, is the subject of the final chapter. Here chivalric romances and chronicles are compared with legal texts. The chapter explores those moments at which ideals of chivalry were evidently not observed, and investigates what happened to knights who failed in this way, in order to ascertain further the ideological and social importance of chivalric values in

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[19] G.Duby, 'The Culture of the Knightly Class: Audience and Patronage', in R.L.Benson and G.Constable (eds.), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth* Century (Oxford, 1982), pp.248-62; see also Kellogg, *Medieval Artistry and Exchange* .

twelfth-century northern France. The chapter begins by looking at examples of bad characters in chivalric romances and exploring how far villainy is determined by nature, noble status, and intention. The second section turns to the serious crime of treason, which might be considered the ultimate transgression of knightly virtues, and explores how far attitudes to villainy are complicated by issues of loyalty and mercy: accounts of treason in chivalric romances and chronicles are compared with twelfth-century laws on treason. The third section investigates the punishments administered for these crimes, thus determining whether villainy found concrete recognition in social action.

By approaching these discourses as dialogues, and investigating the responses they generated, this integrated study of representations of chivalric ideals will allow us to assess the degree of influence chivalric ideals had on the lives of twelfth-century nobles, and how far the voices of different social groups came together and where differences may be registered. It will test their usefulness as political tools, and their power to bolster an exclusive sense of knightly identity. The study will test the validity of chivalric romances as sources for knightly views by reading episodes from romance alongside episodes from a range of other sources. Focusing on key ideals and institutions of chivalry and employing a wide variety of genres will allow for a more accurate study of the significance of chivalric ideals.

Chapter One: The Court

In the romance of *Cligés*, written by Chrétien de Troyes (c.1176),[1] the son of the emperor of Greece departs from his father's court in order to attend the renowned court of King Arthur. Refusing the generous offers of wealth and land made by the emperor, Alexander maintains that he will only consider himself worthy of becoming a knight if he attends Arthur's court:

> Einçois que chevaliers soie,
> Voldrai servir le roi Artu.
> N'ai pas ancor si grant vertu
> Que je poïsse armes porter
> Nus ne m'an porroit retorner,
> Par proiere ne par losange,
> Que je n'aille an la terre estrange
> Veoir le roi et ses barons,
> De cui si granz est li renons
> De corteisie et de proesce. (ll.142-51)
>
> Before I become a knight I wish to serve King Arthur. I am not yet worthy enough to bear arms. No pleading or flattery can keep me from going to that distant land to see the king and his barons, who are so greatly renowned for courtesy and valour.[2]

In chivalric romances, an intrinsic link between the court and values of chivalry is often suggested. Elias has identified the court as the collective environment

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[1] The approximate dates of composition of Chrétien de Troyes's romances may be established by allusions to contemporary political events, and references to patrons, as well as cross-references between his romances. By these means the dates are estimated as follows: *Erec et Enide* c.1169; *Cligés* c.1176; *Le Chevalier au Lion* and *Le Chevalier de la Charrete* the late 1170s; and the unfinished *Le Conte du Graal* the late 1180s-1191: see Kibler, pp.6-9; on Chrétien de Troyes's historical influences see also U.T.Holmes, 'The Arthurian Tradition in Lambert d'Ardres', *Speculum*, 25 (1950), pp.100-3.

[2] Kibler, pp.124-5. Later in the same romance, Alexander in turn advises his own son Cligés that if he wishes to know true valour, he must test himself against the Bretons and English at King Arthur's court: 'ja ne savras/ Conuistre con bien tu vaudras/ De proesce ne de vertu,/ Se a la cort le roi Artu/ Ne te vas esprover einçois/ Et as Bretons et as Einglois': *Cligés*, ll.2565-70.

which led to the emergence of civilising trends.[3] The important role of the noble courts as centres for the growth of behavioural ideologies may be reflected in the emergence in the twelfth century of words derived from the bases 'cort' or 'curia', such as 'cortois', and 'curialis', to denote that 'courtly' behaviour which was admirable in subjects.[4] But how far did the court act as an environment where chivalric values were recognised and practised? In order to find out, this chapter investigates qualities of the court and its knights which were admired, and also deplored, and assesses the role of historical courts in the promotion of chivalric ideals. It does so by exploring representations of the court in a cross-section of texts which were linked to key twelfth-century courts, including chivalric romances, chronicles and also works of court satire.

1.i. *Ceremony and Duty.* The first section explores the role of chivalric ideals at court by examining descriptions in chronicles and chivalric romances of key ceremonial court occasions, and major officers of the court. Court gatherings were important social events which visibly and publicly confirmed hierarchies, and the qualities expected of a court and its members are reflected in these events. An analysis of the role of court officials at these events allows us to explore further the nature of power and of rivalries which existed at court.

1.ii. *Censure of the Court: Court Satire and Chivalric Romances.* 'Court' was not always synonymous with praiseworthy qualities such as prowess and

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[3] N.Elias, *The Civilising Process*, trans. E.Jephcott, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1983), II: State Formation and Civilisation, pp.1-8.

[4] On the origins and development of such trends, see also C.S.Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210* (Philadelphia, 1985).

valour in the twelfth century, which also witnessed the flourishing of a genre of court criticism.[5] These satirical texts, which were written by men who had experience of court life, including Walter Map, Peter of Blois, and John of Salisbury, suggest that there were conflicting opinions regarding the nature and role of courtiers. So, the question arises: how far was there a debate about the nature of the court, and about whether it encouraged chivalric ideals? This section explores in detail some of the problems of the court, as expressed in court criticism and, notably, chivalric romances, and investigates whether these portrayals of the court were purely oppositional, or whether they voiced similar concerns.

1.iii *The Court as a Centre of Chivalric Learning.* The court was a focal point of noble life in northern France in the twelfth century.[6] As well as having fundamental political, economic and judicial roles, the courts of northern France were key places of cultural and social interaction, where different individuals and social groups, including knights and clerics, came together for learning and leisure.[7] When considering the court as an arena for the growth and

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[5] C.Uhlig, *Hofkritik im England des Mittelalters und der Renaissance: Studien zu einem Gemeinplatz der europäischen Moralistik* (Berlin, 1973); Jaeger, *Origins of Courtliness*, esp. pp.176-94; S.Jaeger, 'The Court Criticism of MHG Didactic Poets: Social Structures and Literary Conventions', *Monatshefte*, 74 (1982), pp.398-409.

[6] The courts of Champagne and Flanders in particular were among the most important power bases in the region at this time: Evergates, *Feudal Society in the Bailliage of Troyes*, p.151; J.W.Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1970), I, p.161.

[7] Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal and Countess Marie*, diss. (Princeton, 1959); A.Scaglione, *Knights at Court: Courtliness, Chivalry, and Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1991); J.Bumke, *Höfische Kultur* (1986), trans. T.Dunlap, *Courtly Culture, Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1991); Duby, 'The Culture', esp.pp.260-1. For a discussion of court entertainers, and attitudes toward them, see Baldwin, *Masters*, I, pp.198-203.

dissemination of ideas about chivalric behaviour, and testing the role of texts such as chivalric romances in this process, it is important to consider how knights, who were fundamentally fighting men, would have had access to such ideas. The third section therefore begins by investigating the education of young knights within the court environment, using chronicles and chivalric romances. It then considers the importance placed on learning, and whether there is evidence of a connection between learnedness and chivalric ideals, by looking at representations of the learnedness of key knightly figures in chivalric romances and chronicles. Finally, it explores the kinds of texts which were patronised at courts and which were available in the libraries of the counts.

1.i. Ceremony and Duty

This section investigates the ideological and political significance of the court in an examination of ceremonial court occasions. It seeks to establish first the admirable qualities of a court, and how chivalric ideals were brought into view at court events, by examining descriptions of large court festivals in chronicles and chivalric romances. It then explores the political character of these court events, in a study of the ceremonial functions of key court officers.

First it is useful to identify the principal characteristics of the court. I want to begin by turning to some examples of the renowned court of Arthur, in order that we may establish some of the key qualities admired therein, and then compare these with court gatherings described in chronicle accounts. We have already witnessed the sphere of influence of Arthur's court, which attracts young

aspiring men such as Alexander from other parts of the world, on the strength of its reputation. Early portrayals of the court as a place of worldwide appeal, whose manners were to be emulated, may be found in the *Historia Regum Brittanie* (c.1136) of Geoffrey of Monmouth:[8]

> Tunc inuitatis probissimis quibusque ex longe positis regnis cepit familiam suam augmentare tantamque facetiam in domo sua habere ita ut emulationem longe manentibus populis ingereret. Unde nobilissimus quisque incitatus nichili pendebat se nisi sese in induendo siue in arma ferendo ad modum militum Arturi haberet.
>
> Arthur then began to increase his personal entourage by inviting very distinguished men from far-distant kingdoms to join it. In this way he developed such a code of courtliness in his household that he inspired peoples living far away to imitate him. The result was that even the man noblest of birth, once he was roused to rivalry, thought nothing at all of himself unless he wore his arms and dressed in the same way as Arthur's knights.[9]

In this work, as Arthur's reputation and power increase so the court grows in renown, with the result that he conquers further lands and is feared by other rulers. An amplified description may be found in the French writer Wace's adaptation of Geoffrey's *Historia,* the *Roman de Brut* (1155), which was probably written for Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine:

> Par sei, senz altre enseinement,

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[8] Geoffrey of Monmouth was consecrated Bishop of St Asaph in North Wales in 1152. He spent much time at Oxford, and may have been a teacher there. Geoffrey and Walter Map were acquainted. Their names appear together in charters, and in the dedication of the *Historia*, Geoffrey claims that one of his ancient British sources, on which he based his Latin 'translation', was provided by Map: *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, I, ed. N.Wright (Cambridge, 1985), p.1; L.Thorpe (trans.), *The History of the Kings of Britain* (London, 1966), p.51.

[9] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia*, ed. Wright, p.107; Thorpe (trans.), *History of the Kings*, p.222. The name Arthur was subsequently used for a grandson of Henry II, in order to support the legitimacy of his authority: R.M.Loomis, 'Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth', in J.J.Wilhelm and L.Z.Gross (eds.), *The Romance of Arthur* (New York, 1984), pp.57-86. See Chapter Two for further discussion of the historical use of the names of characters in literature.

Emprist si grant afaitement
E se cuntint tant noblement,
Tant bel e tant curteisement,
N'esteit parole de curt d'ume,
Neis de l'empereür de Rome. (ll.9735-40)

On his own, with no other instruction, he acquired such knightly skill and behaved so nobly, so finely and courteously, that there was no court so talked about, not even that of the Roman emperor.[10]

Public ceremonial court gatherings promote a code of courtliness, and they also create competition. Through the promotion of chivalric deeds and values they help knights to obtain and increase their reputations.

In the chivalric romances of Chrétien de Troyes, the court of King Arthur is made a focal point of chivalric life. The holding of the full court ('plenière') often occurs on key festival days, particularly important religious feasts such as Pentecost.[11] Historical courts also took place at such times. In fact a direct connection exists between literary and historical courts in the case of *Erec et Enide*. Erec's Christmas coronation at Nantes is actually based on the Christmas court held at Nantes by Henry II in 1169, at which his son Geoffrey was invested with the future lordship of Brittany.[12] Despite the fact that these were

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[10] *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. and trans. J.Weiss (Exeter, 1999).
[11] In *Le Conte du Graal* the court held at Pentecost was attended by many counts, dukes and kings, queens, and countesses: ll.2786-7; Kibler, p.415. In *L'Atre Périlleux*, Arthur's great feast at Pentecost was attended by every knight 'of any worth': *L'Atre Périlleux: Roman de la Table Ronde*, ed. B.Woledge (Paris, 1936), ll.7ff; R.G.Arthur (trans.), 'The Perilous Graveyard', in *Three Arthurian Romances: Poems from Medieval France* (London, 1996), p.109. In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, Arthur summons to his solemn Pentecost coronation feast, held at Caerleon, many barons, kings, earls, dukes, knights, and abbots, including those from abroad. The lords of France come with fine weapons, clothes, and horses: ll.10323-6.
[12] The romance episode mirrors closely the political manoeuvres of Henry II: B.Schmolke-Hasselmann, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance: The Verse Tradition from Chrétien to Froissart* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.233-44.

traditionally religious occasions, descriptions of their splendour and expense permeate the accounts. In *Le Chevalier au Lion*, Chrétien de Troyes's pun on the word Pentecost 'justifies' the extravagant nature of the feast by highlighting 'cost' as a part of its essence: 'a cele feste qui tant coste, qu'an doit clamer la Pentecoste' ('at that most costly feast, known as Pentecost', ll.5-6). The pun is perhaps echoed in the *First Continuation*, where Arthur's Pentecost gathering is referred to as given by God:

> Ce fu an mai el tans d'esté
> Que Diex ot cel jor apresté,
> Si biaux con cil qui riens ne couste,
> Qu'an dit le jor de Pantecoste. (ll.7037-40)
>
> It was May, in the summer season when God - for nothing costs
> Him anything - provided that beautiful day they call Pentecost.[13]

As we explore below, the public nature of these events with their emphasis on display and finery allows for the theatrical demonstration of wealth and power.

For these secular elements were a key part of court occasions. The beginning of Chrétien's first Arthurian romance, *Erec et Enide*, places us at Arthur's court at Cardigan on Easter Day. This gathering is a rich and large-scale event, and attending are many people of noble background: indeed,

> einz si riche ne fu veüe,
> que molt i ot boens chevaliers,
> hardiz et conbatanz et fiers,
> et riches dames et puceles,
> filles de rois, gentes et beles. (ll.30-34)

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[13] *Continuations of the Old French* Perceval *Of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. W. Roach, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 1949-83), II, *The First Continuation: Redaction of MSS EMQU*, ed. W. Roach and R. H. Ivy (Philadelphia, 1950); Arthur (trans.) *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.10. This is a glorious day, which includes the knighting of 50 young men, the hearing of mass, and a fine feast (ll.7040-7128).

> so rich a one was never seen, for there were so many good knights, brave and combative and fierce, and rich ladies and maidens, noble and beautiful daughters of kings.[14]

Wealth and nobility characterise the court gatherings in chivalric romances. Ceremonies such as weddings and coronations also occur on a grand scale, accompanied by a great deal of pomp and luxury, and attended by many people. Erec's wedding at court in *Erec et Enide* is one example of such a splendid affair, and one which is again attended by many dukes, counts, and kings.[15] The rich descriptions of this event, including the Alexandrian silk gowns given by Arthur to the one hundred knights whom he had dubbed 'to increase the joy' of the occasion, give emphasis to the luxurious nature of the court gatherings; this, together with the many forms of entertainment provided by the singers, story-tellers and dancers, highlights the court as a place of pleasure. In romances the court is a place where knights convene for festive and ceremonial occasions within an atmosphere of celebration and display.[16] It is in accordance with these principles that Arthur, a king who holds grand courts and who enjoys entertaining, is esteemed as the leader of the most chivalrous knights in the world.

It would appear from historical sources that the great historical courts also hoped to appeal beyond their own immediate locations, and that they attempted to generate similar reputations for ceremony, finery, and enjoyment.

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[14] Kibler, p.37.
[15] *Erec et Enide*, ll.1865-2080; Kibler, pp.60-3.
[16] Arthur tells Gawain to invite Cligés to 'indulge his pleasure' at his court: *Cligés,* ll.4916-8; Kibler, p.183.

At Pentecost in May 1184, Count Baldwin of Hainault attended the great feast at Mainz, at which the sons of Frederick Barbarossa, Henry and Frederick, were knighted. This was a mammoth event, which was attended by many men from a variety of regions: 70,000 knights attended, according to the account by Gislebert of Mons, who was the chaplain and notary of the young Baldwin V of Hainault, son-in-law of Henry the Liberal.[17] References to excessively large numbers of people are a characteristic of this account, as of many other medieval accounts, and must be treated as typical numerical exaggerations;[18] nevertheless they create a sense of the scale of the event, and were clearly meant to communicate the appeal of the court.

When Count Baldwin attended this Pentecost gathering, he brought with him a grand retinue of renowned noblemen, from a wide geographical area.[19] With them his party took servants, rich furnishings and silver vessels ('tam vasis argenteis multis quam ceteris sibi necessariis, et cum servientibus honeste

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[17] Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, ed. L.Vanderkindere, *La Chronique de Gislebert de Mons* (Brussels, 1904), p.156. On Gislebert of Mons see X.de La Selle, 'La cour de Champagne à travers les archives comtales', *Splendeurs de la Cour de Champagne au temps de Chrétien de Troyes*, La Vie en Champagne (Troyes, 1999), pp.8-10 (10). For more on Barbarossa, see M.Pacaut, *Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. A.J.Pomerans (London, 1970); A.Haverkamp, *Medieval Germany, 1056-1273*, trans. H.Braun and R.Mortimer, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1992); H.Fuhrmann, *Germany in the High Middle Ages, c.1050-1200*, trans. T.Reuter (Cambridge, 1986).

[18] At the coronation ceremony in *Erec and Enide*, the tables filled 'five halls'. At each table sat a king, count or duke, and 'at least a hundred knights' occupied each table; these were served by 'thousands' of knights: *Erec et Enide*, ll.6865-74; Kibler, p.122.

[19] 'Comes autem Hanoniensis ad curiam illam cum probis et discretis viris Eustacio de Ruez juniore, Ostone de Trasiniis, Waltero de Warini, Nicholao de Barbencione, Renero de Trith, Hugone de Croiz [...] Nicholao Monacho, Waltero do Stankirca et Henrico ipsius comitis germano [Henry of Sebourg, son of Baldwin IV], milite novo, sericis vestibus ornatis, per Namurcam et per Leodium, per Aquas et per Confluentiam transiens': Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p.155.

ornatis').[20] In fact so many men attended the court that Barbarossa made a temporary settlement by the banks of the Rhine. Gislebert is anxious to assert that the tents of Baldwin's retinue were the finest of them all ('Ibi dominus comes Hanoniensis plura ceteris et pulchriora tentoria habuit'.)[21] The element of display is again emphasised here: the numbers of men attending, and the rich ornaments, were clearly an important part of the event. The desire to hold or to attend an impressive court gathering, and to provide or bear rich accoutrements, is thus documented in historical sources, and the emphasis on display with its topos of outdoing may hint at deeper social and political implications.

Indeed, even chivalric romances seem to suggest that the holding of grand courts did not stem simply from a love of ceremony and enjoyment. A need to make an impression, through wealth and the demonstration of noble values, is clear in *Cligés*, where visitors to a court are similarly concerned with bringing wealth, and appearing well-bred. When Alexander and his fellow Greeks finally reach Arthur's court, which is being held at Winchester, the foreign knights remove their mantles so as not to appear ill-bred',[22] and Alexander wins the love of the kings and knights at Arthur's court because he makes a point of giving and spending liberally.[23] These visiting knights are anxious to adhere to expected forms of behaviour when at court. Court leaders also played an important part in the distribution of gifts at court occasions. In

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[20] Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p.155.
[21] Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p.155.
[22] *Cligés*, ll.333-5; Kibler, p.127.
[23] This passage is explored further in Chapter Three.

Erec et Enide, Arthur's provision of food and gifts at Erec's coronation at Nantes serves as an example of his *largesse*, a key chivalric virtue,[24] and gain Arthur the privilege of being compared with such symbols of liberality and power as Alexander the Great.[25]

These acts of *largesse* in romances are matched in the account of the festival at Mainz. The court gathering lasted for several days, and on the second day, 21 May, at which Barbarossa's sons Henry and Frederick were knighted, gifts were distributed to noble and captive knights, and those who had taken the cross ('ab ... multa militibus captivis et cruce signatis'), as well as to the entertainers ('et joculatoribus et joculatricibus data sunt, scilicet equi, vestes preciose, aurum et argentum').[26] Furthermore, the association of the leader of a court with a famous figure of liberality also occurs in the case of the Mainz court. This court was attended by Guiot of Provins, who was a successful poet travelling in court circles, including that of Henry the Liberal.[27] In his *Bible* (c.1206),[28] which laments the general demise of the court, Guiot praised the mighty court gathering at Mainz, and in the process he explicitly linked the name

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[24] See Chapter Three.

[25] *Erec et Enide,* ll.6499-end. For example: 'The king was very powerful and generous: he did not give mantles made of serge, nor of rabbit or dark-brown wool, but of samite and ermine, of whole miniver and mottled silk, bordered with orphrey, stiff and rough. Alexander, who conquered so much that he subdued the whole world and was so generous and rich, was poor and miserly compared with him': ll.6605-6614; Kibler, p.119. Medieval attitudes to the figure of Alexander as a symbol of *largesse* are explored in greater depth in Chapter Three.

[26] Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p.156.

[27] Benton, 'The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center', p.29. Henry the Liberal is listed in the poem as one of Guiot's patrons: see Chapter Three.

[28] Guiot de Provins, *Bible*, in J.Orr (ed.), *Oeuvres de Guiot de Provins* (Manchester, 1915). For other German poetic accounts of the Mainz court, see P.Munz, *Frederick Barbarossa: A Study in Medieval Politics* (Frome, 1969), pp.360-1, n.2.

of the emperor Frederick with that of King Arthur, among other great names, thus helping to ensure that it achieved legendary status:

> Mar lor membre du Roi Artu,
> D'Alixandre et de Juliu,
> Et des autres Princes vaillanz
> Qui jà tindrent les Corz si granz.
> Quel cort tint ore Asuérus!
> Ele dura cent jorz et plus;
> Et de l'Emperéor Ferri
> Vos puis bien dire que je vi
> Qu'il tint une Cort à Maience;
> Ice vos di-je sanz doutance,
> C'onques sa pareille ne fu. (ll.272-81)

Notably Guiot assumes a familiarity on the part of his audience with the renowned literary king, and expects the parallel to enhance the splendour of Barbarossa's court in their eyes, suggesting therefore that references to Arthur's court were not only familiar, but considered to be representative of good courts, and by extension that chivalric romances were worthy points of reference.

Accounts of the historical court at Mainz and imaginary courts in the chivalric romances emphasise the role of chivalric values such as *largesse* and courtesy at court events. Knightly activities such as tournaments and jousting were also often an important part of these occasions.[29] In the third week of Erec's wedding celebrations in *Erec et Enide*, a tournament is arranged by the wedding guests (ll.2072-6). The Mainz court also resulted in tourneying, which took place on the second and third days. Tens of thousands of knights came together and took part in another exhibition of knightly grandeur, notably

[29] Tournaments were specifically supported by the counts of Champagne and Flanders: see Chapter Two.

without actually engaging in any serious physical conflict: 'Gyrum autem sine armis fuit; in scutis etenim gerendis et hastis et baneriis et cursu equorum absque ictibus delectabantur milites'.[30] The emphasis remained on knightly display: to fight on Pentecost was officially forbidden by the Truce of God movement established in the eleventh century, which protected such holy church occasions.[31] The chronicle account of the high court at Mainz reveals a similar pattern of chivalric activities and practices as the accounts of court gatherings in romances.

The court can therefore be described as a vibrant centre of chivalric life, according to these accounts, where key knightly activities took place and chivalric ideals were on display. The exhibition of wealth and grandeur appears to be an important part of its identity and highlights the political role of public court gatherings. It is the sign of a good leader and princely power to be surrounded by many men and to hold court often. By holding grand plenary courts, Arthur makes a statement about his power and status. He can order people to come to his court, as he does at Erec's wedding:

> par son rëaume anvea
> et rois et dus et contes querre,
> ces qui de lui tenoient terre,
> que nul si hardi n'i eüst
> qu'a la Pantecoste ne fust.
> N'i a nul qui remenoir ost,
> qui a la cort ne vaigne tost,
> des que li rois les ot mandez. (ll.1874-81)
>
> [the king] throughout his kingdom sent for kings, dukes, and counts, those who held land for him, declaring that none should

[30] Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, pp.157-60 (157).
[31] J.Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 2000), pp.150-4 (152).

> be so bold as to be absent at Pentecost. None dared to stay behind or to fail to come quickly to court, once they had received the king's summons.[32]

The obligation to attend the king's court reminds us that Arthur has the superior position as leader of the court; not attending the court would appear disobedient, and possibly also uncourtly.[33] Large public gatherings, even in the celebratory setting of chivalric romances, were an opportunity to demonstrate or achieve power and political standing, and to ensure loyalties.[34] When the future Henry VI donned the crown at the Mainz court, in the sight of so many key figures, this act was intended to secure his future position. Ritual was a traditional way of sanctioning power in early medieval France, and the increasing contribution made to public rituals by specifically chivalric forms in twelfth-century northern France reflects the changing relationships between knights and their leaders.[35] It is clear that the political and cultural roles of the court are not entirely separable, and that knightly qualities were of sufficient influence to make it desirable that noble powers had themselves described in these terms.

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[32] Kibler, p.61. Note that weddings are also a way of creating alliances beneficial to lords. In 1171 Henry the Liberal and Philip of Flanders made arrangements for the marriage of Henry's son to Philip's niece, and her brother to Henry's sister, one of which took place: Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, p.47.

[33] 'No one ... whoever he held his fief from, from the West as far as Muntgieu, was accounted courtly if he did not go to Arthur's court and stay with him and wear the livery, device and armour in the fashion of those who served at court': Wace, *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, ll.9761-72.

[34] Before attending the court festival at Mainz, Baldwin of Hainault had previously appealed to Philip of Flanders for help in ensuring an inheritance; his negotiations are returned to after Gislebert's description of the tournaments: Gislebert, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, pp.160-3.

[35] G.Koziol, 'England, France, and the Problem of Sacrality in Twelfth-Century Ritual', Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power*, pp.124-48 (131-47). See also Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, pp.262-4.

The expression of power and status which was highly visible at court ceremonies was closely related to rivalries which existed at court. I want to explore further the ideological and political implications of court ceremonies by examining in some detail the ceremonial duties of specific court officials.[36] Two types of honorary court position will be considered: the seneschal and the chamberlain, as these officers held important positions at court, often being an advisor to the count, and their duties included the serving of food and wine at key ceremonial events.[37]

The seneschal had one of the most important roles at court next to the leader. He enjoyed the highest position in the hierarchy of court officers, and had a large amount of political power. The seneschal was often a great lord, and he played a key political role.[38] The word 'seneschal', with its root 'senescere' (to grow old), relays the seniority of this position. The chamberlain was of a slightly lesser status than the seneschal, but still played a significant role in the affairs of the court, acting as a financial officer and a personal attendant to the count.[39] One of the duties of both the seneschal and the chamberlain was to serve the count at table at important ceremonial functions, and I want to illustrate the seriousness with which this role was regarded, by exploring the domestic and political roles of servers in chivalric romances and chronicles, where they are given significant space to suggest that these positions were respected.

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[36] On court officials at the court of Flanders, see Warlop, *The Flemish Nobility*, I, pp.156-80.
[37] In fact, these figures feature increasingly in descriptions of the serving of kings at festive events: Koziol, 'England, France, and the Problem of Sacrality', p.136.
[38] Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, pp.78-80.
[39] Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, pp.85-100.

Twelfth-century literary texts reflect the high position enjoyed by these two court officers. The servers in the *Historia Regum Britannie* and the *Roman de Brut*, Kay the seneschal and Bedevere the cup-bearer, enjoy Arthur's particular regard. They are brave men who not only partake in serving Arthur at table, but also accompany him in battle. When Arthur holds high court at Paris at Easter, he gives to them the lands of Anjou and Normandy respectively;[40] later they are buried with much honour, having died honourably in battle against Lucius Hiberius.[41] The prominence of such office holders in court society is reflected in their prominence in Chrétien de Troyes's romances, particularly in the case of Kay the Seneschal. The fact that in chivalric romances the functions of such men are often linked with their names, so that characters are referred to as Lucan the Butler, Kay the Seneschal, and Bedevere the Cup-Bearer, makes more immediate the centrality of their roles. The importance attached to Kay the Seneschal is well illustrated in an episode in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*.[42] Arthur is holding a 'splendid and luxuriant' court at Camelot on Ascension Day, and the king, queen, ladies and barons are in the hall having enjoyed a meal,

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[40] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia*, ed. Wright, p.109; Thorpe (trans.), *History of the Kings,* p.225; Wace, *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, ll.10153-62: here they are described as Arthur's faithful subjects, who knew all his counsel. Gislebert of Mons and the Flemish chancellor William compiled lists of the officers at court (c.1210), and those at the top of the lists had a serving role: Gislebert of Mons, 'Ministeria curie Hanoniensis', ed. W.Arndt, MGH SS 21 (1963), pp.602-5.

[41] Bedevere is buried royally at Bayeux; Kay at Chinon: Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia*, ed. Wright, p.129; Thorpe (trans.), *History of the Kings,* p.257.

[42] Kay also serves Arthur in *Le Conte du Graal*: l.416; in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, p.111; Thorpe (trans.), *History of the Kings,* p.229; in Wace's *Roman de Brut*, ll.10463-72; and in the *Perlesvaus* the seneschal serves once again, together with Lucan the butler and other knights: *Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus*, ed. W.A.Nitze and T.A.Jenkins (Chicago, 1932), I, Branch II, ll.590-2; *The High Book of the Grail*, trans. N.Bryant (Woodbridge, 1978), p.33.

which was overseen by Kay the Seneschal.[43] When Kay states his intention to leave Arthur's court, Arthur is shocked and pleads with Kay to stay in his service, exclaiming:

> Seneschax, si con vos solez,
> soiez a cort, et sachiez bien
> que je n'ai en cest mond rien
> que je, por vostre demorance,
> ne vos doigne sanz porloignance. (ll.106-110)

> Sir seneschal, remain at court as you have in the past, and be assured that there's nothing I have in all this world that I'd not give you at once to keep you here.[44]

When Kay refuses, a perplexed Arthur sends his queen to the seneschal, even requesting that she begs him to stay if necessary, for he would 'never again be happy' if he had to lose Kay's company. When he refuses to stay, the queen does fall at his feet (ll.148-9). The distress caused by the potential loss of the seneschal and his service show that he is much valued at the court, and the act of a queen begging on her knees reinforces this. Similarly, in *Le Chevalier au Lion* Yvain leaves the court in secret in order to avenge Calogrenant, because he knows that otherwise Arthur will grant the opportunity to Kay.[45]

This would suggest that literary courts reflect the historical valuation of officers at court. Yet although the possible loss of Kay is deeply regretted by the king and queen, from this point in the romance, and also in the ensuing romances of *Le Chevalier au Lion* and *Le Conte du Graal*, he is described as a

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[43] For more on the figure of Kay in chivalric romances, see: Gowans, *Cei*; P.Gallais, *Le Sénéchal Keu et les romanciers français du XIIe et du XIIIe siècles* (Poitiers, 1967); H.J.Herman, *Sir Kay: A Study of the Character of the Seneschal of King Arthur's Court* (Pennsylvania, 1960).
[44] Kibler, p.208.
[45] *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ll.682-6.

scheming and vicious man. In other literary accounts, too, the figure of the seneschal became a stock figure of evil.[46] As Benton has observed, the negative portrayal of seneschals may reflect real-life tensions. The seneschal exercised a large amount of power and was not always in agreement with the court leader.[47] A seneschal's high position and status, his political power, and his access to influential figures may have made him a figure of envy at court.[48]

Another good example of the value which was attached to these ceremonial roles at court is provided by an account of a feast in Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium* (c.1181-2). Feasts involved symbolic social acts, and combined political strategies with celebration and luxurious display.[49] Map (b.c.1130) describes the actions of William II of Tancarville, the king's chamberlain, at Henry II's Christmas feast at Caen in 1182, which was another key historical event attracting men from afar.[50] It is important to note that the *De*

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[46] Other literary characters suffer at the hands of scheming seneschals. Lunete is betrayed by a seneschal in Yvain (see Chapter Five); and in *Le Conte du Graal* another evil seneschal, Anguingueron, kills and imprisons many knights: ll.1197-2026.

[47] Thibaut of Blois had disputes with both Louis VII and Philip Augustus: Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, p.78.

[48] It is worth noting that in Marie de France's *Lai de Lanval*, the hero Lanval is ignored by Arthur in his distribution of gifts, and nobody is prepared to recommend the knight, due to their envy of his noble nature and his *largesse*: Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. J.Rychner, CFMA (Paris, 1983), ll.11-20; *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. G.S.Burgess and K.Busby (London, 1986), p.73. See Chapter Three.

[49] See R.C.Wood, *The Sociology of the Meal* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp.6-36. The social, economic, and political connotations of feasting, greeting, and gift-giving between nobles are discussed in detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. For more on the relationship between ritual and rulership strategies, see Chapter Four, and D.S.Brewer, 'Feasts', *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. D.S.Brewer and J.Gibson (Woodbridge, 1997), pp.131-142; Elias, *The Court Society*; G.Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1992); A.J.Duggan (ed.), *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London, 1993).

[50] This event was attended by William Marshal: see Chapter Two. It is described in the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, which states that the expected *largesse* at the court was experienced by some, but not everybody: *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, ed. P.Meyer, Société de l'Histoire de France (Paris, 1891-1901), ll.5693-714.

Nugis Curialium did not circulate as a text in the twelfth century, and that it cannot be considered as unbiased historical reportage, due to its satirical nature.[51] Yet it nevertheless presents the importance of ceremonial roles at court according to Map's contemporaries. William was the son of Rabel of Tancarville, who had previously been master chamberlain. Members of the Tancarville family had held the position of master chamberlain for many years before this time, and continued to inherit the position into the fourteenth century.[52] At the gathering described by Walter Map, a great number of people were assembled, including King Henry and his sons, and many dukes, counts, bishops, and barons.[53] When the acting chamberlain went to pour water on the king's hands at the beginning of the feast, William of Tancarville seized the basins of water:

> Ecce per medium pressure predictus Willelmus, eo quod esset summus camerarius, multis equitibus ut mos eius erat comitatus, et palla proiecta sicut mos est ministrorum, pelues argenteas arripuit traxitque fortiter ad se. (v.6)
>
> Lo! Through the midst of the crowd came the aforesaid William – being the great chamberlain – escorted as was his wont by a number of knights, and casting off his cloak in the way proper for ministers, seized the silver basins and pulled them violently towards him.[54]

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[51] See M.Chibnall, *The Normans* (Oxford, 2000), p.139.
[52] For a history of the holders of the office of chamberlain, see H.A.Doubleday, G.H.White and Howard de Walden (eds.), *The Complete Peerage*, X (London, 1945), Appendix F, pp.47-58.
[53] 'That wonderful King Henry, and a third Henry, the duke of Saxony and Bavaria (then an exile), son-in-law to our king, Richard, count of Poitou, who is now king, Geoffrey his brother, duke of Brittany, and a great many bishops, together with the province-ful of counts and barons': Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, v.6, pp.488-9.
[54] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.488-9.

Having personally distributed the water to the king, the king's sons, and the duke of Saxony, William then went to take his seat.

The response of the court to this action was mixed. It caused outrage among those gathered, although the king himself seemed untouched. The next morning the seneschal of Normandy, William FitzRalph, inveighed against this 'robbery' by William of Tancarville. The chamberlain replied in defence of himself:

> Vim quidem intuli, non uiolenciam. Verumptamen iusta ui iureque traxi pelues, summus domini regis asserit senescallus, hoc contradico, quia quod michi ius appropriate, iuste tuli. (v.6)
>
> Force I did bring to bear, not violence ... Yet it was with a just force and of right that I, the great chamberlain of our lord the king, seized the basins.[55]

Clearly the right of the master chamberlain to perform his ceremonial function at important court occasions was keenly felt.

The king's own response to the chamberlain's action was to give an account of how he had once been at his lodging in Paris with King Louis VII, when William, the hereditary butler, rushed into the house, fought off the butler acting in his place, and took hold of the vessel of wine, exclaiming that he had an ancestral right to the position, and that this had been usurped:

> meorum pincernarum princeps sum et primus; hic autem quem deieci presumpsit arroganter sibi ius meum. (v.6)
>
> I am the chief and first of the butlers; but this man whom I have knocked down has arrogantly assumed to himself my right'.[56]

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[55] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.490-1.
[56] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium,* pp.492-5.

The king concludes that Tancarville's action was not wrong, but rather that this man was courteous for behaving in this way. Walter Map in turn uses the story to demonstrate the courtesy of the king, and to show his just and merciful nature.[57] The idea that to serve at court was degrading[58] was obviously not shared by these twelfth-century functionaries, who saw their job as a privilege and a statement of an esteemed position at court. These examples show that the honorific duties of serving given to officers during ceremonial events were taken seriously enough to dispute over, and that they were felt to be an indicator of social status and esteem, as well as a matter of correct behaviour.

Seating arrangements at feasts were another way by which positions at court were reflected, and could be a way of conferring honour.[59] Chrétien de Troyes's chivalric romances make mention of the Round Table, invented by Wace, in whose *Roman de Brut* it features as a means of avoiding rivalry between knights.[60] This again bears witness to a potential for political rivalry and unrest, in the formation of what is often today considered a symbol of unity.[61] In fact Chrétien de Troyes actually follows contemporary practice by representing tables as rectangular boards, which were assembled before a meal,[62]

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[57] On the royal household and government, see W.L.Warren, *Henry II* (London, 1973), pp.254-5, 362-96.

[58] L.Gowans misunderstands the role of the seneschal when she writes that 'those whose sphere of responsibility includes the kitchen are not best placed for an heroic - or even commendable - literary career': *Cei and the Arthurian Legend* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 46-7, 38-9, 60-1.

[59] See Chapter Four for more on this theme.

[60] Wace, *Roman de Brut*, ll.9751-60.

[61] It is worth noting that the *Roman de Brut* and other Arthurian chronicles may have been a tool of British political propaganda for Henry II, whose court patronised learning and poetry: B.Schmolke-Hasselmann, 'The Round Table: Ideal, Fiction, Reality', *Arthurian Literature*, 2 (1982), pp.41-75, esp.pp.59,61-75.

[62] Schmolke-Hasselmann, 'The Round Table', pp.41-9. The phrase 'round table' should not be taken too literally: the lord would often sit at the head of the high table: *Conte du Graal*, ll.913,

and even at the Caerleon feast in Wace's *Brut*, Arthur sits upon the dais, and his men sit around the board according to 'l'ordre de s'enur'.[63] The arrangements also suggest its deeper social implications and reflect the hierarchies which existed at court. This suggests much about the political implications of court positions. Conflicts over the performance of ceremonial roles at court bring to the fore the way in which the court could make visible a 'pecking order' based both on family background, position, and favour with the court leader.

The ferocity with which William the chamberlain and William the butler defended their ceremonial roles reflects the importance of having one's station at court recognised, and suggests the privileges and power linked to such a role, which are demonstrated in both chronicles and chivalric romances. In turn the positive reactions of the leaders towards their serving-men reinforce their rights to their position, and their importance to the leader. The portrayal of functions at ceremonial events instils harmony by emphasising a sense of correct hierarchy, and at the same time underlines the political importance of ceremonial court occasions.

The hierarchy of positions at court is also represented in the witness lists from charters of the court of Champagne, in which the occurrence and the ordering of names similarly suggest that social and familial status were factors which influenced the acquiring of the highest court offices. Although the

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2771. Similarly in the Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, although the 'Rounde Table' is mentioned, the description of the knights' seating arrangements actually reflect contemporary customs: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J.R.R.Tolkien and E.V.Gordon, rev. N.Davis (Oxford, 1967), ll.39, 73.

[63] Wace, *Roman de Brut*, ll.10460-62.

charters themselves may have been drawn up after an event, the witness lists may be used as an indication of figures who were present at certain court gatherings, and whose presence was considered worthy of mention. The witness lists show that the seneschal, butler, and constable, who ranked immediately below the principal ruling count, or countess,[64] were most often men of high status, whose families had high social ranking.[65]

Chivalric romances reflect the array of officers at historical courts in their portrayal of seneschals, dukes, counts, barons, and knights. Certain knights enjoy the particular love of Arthur, for example Gawain and Erec in *Erec et Enide*,[66] and it is always knights who make up the larger part of his retinue. In chivalric romances knights are the focus of the action, and enjoy a close relationship with their lord. This may well reflect the increasing power experienced by knightly classes in the twelfth century.

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[64] The court of Champagne was under the rulership of countess Marie for a considerable amount of time, from the death of Henry (1181) until 1187, and again from 1190, when their son Henry was in the Holy Land, until her own death in 1198. Evidence suggests that Marie of Champagne was involved, both during Henry's reign and her own, in affairs of state: Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, pp.61-3, 72-4. On the political authority exercised by the countesses of Champagne and Flanders in the twelfth century, see T.Evergates, 'Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne', *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. T.Evergates (Philadelphia, 1999), pp.74-110; K.S.Nicholas, 'Countesses as Rules in Flanders', in *Aristocratic Women*, ed. Evergates, pp.111-37. Strohm describes the twelfth century as a 'zenith of queenly authority'; after this point the affairs of state and household were separated, and queens gained only symbolic recognition: *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992), pp.95-119. See also: P.Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997); R.Lejeune, *Littérature et société occitane au moyen âge* (Liège, 1979), pp.401-72; E.A.R.Brown, 'Eleanor of Aquitaine: Parent, Queen and Duchess', *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Parent, Queen and Duchess*, ed. W.W.Kibler (London, 1976), pp.9-34; D.D.R.Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford, 1993), pp.14-102.

[65] Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, pp.77-84.

[66] *Erec et Enide*, ll.2230-6; Kibler, p.65.

The analysis of ceremonial court festivities and offices in chronicles and chivalric romances has revealed the emphasis on luxury and splendour, and the rivalry which lay beneath the surface. Court ceremonies were a way of enhancing power and demonstrating knightly virtues. By their nature they excluded the lower ranks of society, and provided an opportunity for the demonstration of power and the confirmation of knightly identity. In fact, in chivalric romances a very large gap usually exists between the noble knights of the chivalric court and other members of society, such as peasants,[67] and also merchants,[68] a gap which serves only to emphasise the superiority of values of the knightly classes.

1.ii Censure of the Court: Court Satire and Chivalric Romances

The centrality of the court in the twelfth-century imagination has been demonstrated by means of its idealisation in romances and chronicles. Another way in which the prominence of the court may be demonstrated is by examining the repugnance with which it was regarded. I now want to compare representations of the court in some works of court satire with portrayals in chivalric romances and then point to some hitherto unnoticed similarities between the two genres.

Far from being a place exemplary of knightly virtue, the court in satirical accounts is an arena where vanity, greed and corruption reign. John of Salisbury

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[67] This is illustrated by Calogrenant's encounter with a churl in the forest in *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ll.276-407; Kibler, pp.298-300.
[68] The portrayal of merchants in *Guillaume d'Angleterre* is discussed in this light in Chapter Three.

(c.1115-1180) asked in his highly influential *Policraticus* (c.1156-1159), 'quis est enim cui uirutem non excutiant curialium nugae?' ('who is it whose virtue is not cast aside by the frivolities of courtiers?')[69] Satirists' descriptions of the meaning of the court are imbued with pejorative interpretations of its nature. Map opened his *De Nugis Curialium* with the following statement about the elusive character of the court: 'in curia sum, et de curia loquor, et nescio, Deus scit, quid sit curia' ('in the court I exist and of the court I speak, and what the court is, God knows, I know not').[70] According to this account, the court was not easily defined, even by a courtier. Map elaborated further on the perplexing nature of the court:

> temporalis quidem est, mutabilis et uaria, localis et erratica, nunquam in eodem statu permanens. In recessu meo totam agnosco, in reditu nichil aut modicum inuenio quod dereliquerim; extraneam uideo factus alienus. Eadem est curia, sed mutata sunt membra. Si descripsero curiam ut Porphirius diffinit genus, forte non menciar, ut dicam eam multitudinem quodammodo se habentem ad unum principium. (i.1)
>
> Temporal it is, changeable and various, space-bound and wandering, never continuing in one state. When I leave it, I know it perfectly: when I come back to it I find nothing or but little of what I left there: I am become a stranger to it, and it to me. The court is the same, its members are changed. I shall perhaps be within the bounds of truth if I describe it in the terms which Porphyry uses to define a genus, and call it a number of objects bearing a certain relation to one principle.[71]

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[69] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. C.I.Webb, 2 vols (Oxford, 1909), I, V.10, p.566; C.J.Nederman (trans.), *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1996), p.90.
[70] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.1, pp.2-3.
[71] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.2-3.

This, needless to say, is the language of the schools, and appropriates arguments from Aristotle's *Categories*, and Augustine's *Confessions*.[72] But for all its clerical elaboration, the passage puts its finger on the historical contradictions of the court. Map's description suggests that while there is variance within the court, due to the fluidity of membership, yet 'the court' itself remains a constant entity, which binds together its various component parts. The court, although elusive and changing, is an institution. The phrase 'spacebound and wandering' captures the paradoxical fact that the court was both fixed yet moveable: while certain places (such as Troyes and Provins in the case of Henry the Liberal) were places at which key courts were regularly held, the court also moved around the country.[73] Map's initial description of the court immediately raises questions about the nature of the court and suggests it as a place of uncertainty.

As Map's account continues, the fluidity of the court is shown to be the cause of rivalry and consequently falsity and artfulness. Life at the court was centred around a principal leader: in chivalric romances Arthur is respected by his knights. But according to Map, courtiers are constantly trying to ingratiate themselves with such a figure: 'Multitudo certe sumus infinita, uni soli placere contendens' ('We courtiers are assuredly a number, and an infinite one, and all

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[72] Porphyry, *Introd. in Aristol. Categorias, Boethius' translation*, in *Aristoteles Latinus*, ed. L.Minio-Paluello, i, 6-7 (Bruges, 1966), p.6; Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S.Pine-Coffin (London, 1961), xi.25, p.273.

[73] While some travelled regularly as part of the count's retinue, many others attended the court but did not reside within it, or visited when the court was travelling in their own vicinity: Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, p.130.

striving to please one individual', i.1). Such attempts were vain nevertheless, for like Boethius's figure of Fortune,

> recte quidem et hoc, ut sola sit mobilitate stabilis. Solis illis curia placet qui graciam eius consecuntur. Nam et ipsa gracias dat: non enim amabiles aut merentes amari diligit. (i.1)
>
> The court is constant only in its inconstancy. To those alone is the court satisfactory who obtain her grace. For she does confer grace, inasmuch as it is not the loveable or those worthy of love whom she affects.[74]

The favour of the court is thus apparently arbitrary, controlled not by reason but more by chance. Map's descriptions of the court have the effect of underlining the vulnerable position of the courtier.

The pressure of competing for favour leads to the art of false flattery, and to the trickery and deception of courtiers by their fellows wishing for the favour of the lord. According to Walter Map, the uncontrolled ambition of courtiers leads to their downfall: 'Tot nos hortatur aculeis dominatrix curie cupiditas, quod pre sollicitudine risus eliminatur' ('Covetousness, the Lady of the Court, urges us on with so many prickings that our mirth gives way to anxiety').[75] Riddled with ambitious men, the court becomes a dangerous place.

This point of view is supported by John of Salisbury's comments in his *Entheticus de dogmate philosophorum*,[76] a poem which satirised the court of

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[74] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.2-3; Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. V.E.Watts (London, 1969), ii.1.
[75] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.1, pp.4-5.
[76] John of Salisbury, *Entheticus*, in *John of Salisbury's Entheticus Maior and Minor*, ed. and trans. J.Van Laarhoven, I (Leiden, 1987).

Henry II, and in which a substantial section is dedicated to the 'bad court'. John of Salisbury advised of the need to be careful and discreet in dealings at court:

> Aut taceas prorsus, aut pauca loquaris in aula,
> aut quaeras, in quo rure latere queas;
> nam si non parcis verbis, nemo tibi parcet,
> pravenietque dies impia turba tuos.
>
> Either be utterly silent or speak little at court,
> or find out in what country you can hide;
> for if you are not sparing in your words, no one will spare you
> and the impious mob will take over your days.[77]

The court environment, warn the satirists, is full of many traps. Evil beasts, including serpents, dwell here.[78] The sense of rivalry at court suggested earlier by the emphasis on courtly ceremony is reflected in court satire.

Alongside the satirists' portrayals of the general rivalries and predatoriness of courtiers, came complaints that knights lived a life of overindulgence. In court satire the figure of the knight is characterised by inactivity and an obsession with luxuries. Peter of Blois (d.after 1204) was court chaplain to king Henry II. In a letter written to an Archdeacon John,[79] Peter criticised his two nephews, in the process providing a general condemnation of knighthood. Peter complained that knights were no longer fulfilling their military obligations, because they were too distracted by the luxuries which were indulged in at court. This had reduced them to a state of ineffectiveness, so that the expeditions of armed warriors had been substituted by banquets, and their

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[77] John of Salisbury, *Entheticus*, ll.1509-12.
[78] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium,* i.10, i.2.
[79] Peter of Blois, 'Epistolae', letter 94, PL 207, 293-7. Peter of Blois also wrote lyrics: one of these was written as a protest against the imprisonment of Richard Coeur-de-lion by Leopold of Austria: P.Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (London, 1968), pp.213-4.

weaponry by wines and cheeses ('summarii eorum non ferro, sed vino, non lanceis, sed caseis, non ensibus, sed utribus, non hastis, sed verebus onerantur'). Warlike expeditions had given way to highly wrought illusions of battle which were painted onto knights' saddles and shields. These were imaginary battles ('imaginaria visione delectent in pugnis') in which knights had no intention of participating.[80] Peter of Blois's descriptions of these knights were doubtless embroidered, and his work uses the polarised language of criticism,[81] but they provide an important counterpart to the picture of knightly life in chivalric romances. The question remains as to whether these perspectives stood in full opposition to each other.

There is some evidence that satirists opposed those knightly qualities which we have seen celebrated in accounts of court festivals in chivalric romances. John of Salisbury encapsulates many of those elements in the following criticism:

> Illa tamen perniciosius nocent inter omnes curiae nugatores qui sub praetextu honestatis et liberalitatis miseriae suae solent ineptias colorare, qui nitidiores incedunt, qui splendidius epulantur, qui propriam ad mensam saepius extraneos compellunt accedere, humaniores domi, foris benigniores, affabiliores in sermone, liberiores in sententiis, in proximorum cultu munifici et omnium uirtutum imitatione praeclari.
>
> Among all courtly fools, those who do harm most perniciously are those who are accustomed to glossing over their wretched frivolities under the pretext of honour and liberality, who move about in bright apparel, who feast splendidly, who often urge

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[80] Peter of Blois, 'Epistolae', 296.

[81] Jaeger, *Origins*, pp.176-94; R.W.Southern, 'Peter of Blois: A Twelfth-Century Humanist?', in his *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford, 1970), p.117. In providing these negative images of their failures, Peter is able to establish an ideology of good knights in accordance with his own agenda: Jaeger, 'Courtliness and Social Change', p.292.

> strangers to join them at the dinner table, who are courteous at home, benign when abroad, affable in speech, liberal in judgement, generous in the treatment of kin, and distinguished for the imitation of all virtues.[82]

Honour and *largesse*, feasting and hospitality, and courteous speech: these are all characteristics of the ideal chivalric court in romances, and all are challenged here. According to John of Salisbury, courtiers are actors, whose obsession with luxuries and with gaining favour has created a climate of insincerity. We might at this point recall the anxiety shown by the courtiers at Caen intent on performing their ceremonial duties at Henry's table.

It is easy to discuss these criticisms of the court as rhetorical gestures, but in many cases they seem to have their source in the personal experiences of the writers. All of the writers whose works have been considered were familiar with the court circles of which they wrote. John of Salisbury mixed with the powerful figures of the twelfth century, including Henry II and Thomas Becket (1117-70), and he was instructed by Abelard, William of Conches, and Thierry of Chartres. John of Salisbury was exiled from the court of Theobald (1156-7), during which time he dwelt in France and began the *Policraticus*, and he was also exiled from England by Henry II from 1163 to 1170, and thus had experience of being out of favour at court. He corresponded personally with Count Henry of Champagne while in exile at Reims (1163-70), and among his letters was one which

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[82] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb, I, V.10, p.325; Nederman (trans.), *Policraticus*, p.87.

celebrated the count's interest in matters of philosophy and learning (as well as his competence in Latin).[83]

John's contemporary Walter Map was a court clerk and became archdeacon of Oxford, and he was known in the Middle Ages as the author of the Vulgate *Lancelot* cycle.[84] He was born of noble parentage, and was an esteemed member of Henry II's court. Evidence suggests that he occasionally attended the court of Champagne,[85] and he gave a complimentary account of the hospitality he once enjoyed in the company of Count Henry.[86] Prominent educated figures, these men were engaged with contemporary philosophical and cultural issues and they travelled widely in court circles, including the courts of northern France. These learned writers thus had first-hand experience of court life in England and France.

One of the solutions suggested by these writers was avoidance of the court environment altogether. Gerald of Wales (c.1146-1223) was born of a Norman father, William de Barri, and Angharad, granddaughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr, and became archdeacon of Brecon in 1175.[87] He studied and lectured at Paris, and was chaplain to Henry II in 1184. He was closely involved in

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[83] *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, II, ed. and trans. W.J.Millor and C.N.L.Brooke (Oxford, 1979), letter 209. This letter is discussed later in the Chapter.

[84] On this, and on Map's possible authorship of other poems, see Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.xx-xxiii; *Poems of Walter Mapes*, ed. T.Wright (New York, 1841), pp.xxvi-xvii.

[85] Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, p.7.

[86] This is discussed in Chapter Four.

[87] His uncle David FitzGerald (d.1176) was bishop of St David's. Gerald's own ambition to become Bishop of St David's was never fulfilled. In one work, he refers to the 'discovery' of King Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury Abbey by Henry II, which he travelled to see personally: 'De Principis Instructione Liber', *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. G.F.Warne (RS 8; London, 1891), I.20, pp.126-9. Gerald praises Arthur as a generous and pious patron.

contemporary political and religious matters. Gerald described his disappointment in the attitude he found at court, and how he turned away from life there.[88] He criticised the court by means of a game which was actually popular at court:

> Curiam igitur et aleam quadam videas proprietate conformes. Quoniam, ut ait poeta,
> 'Sic ne perdiderit, non cessat perdere lusor,
> Dum revocat cupidas alea blanda manus.'
> Levi namque mutatione haud dissimiliter dicas;
> 'Sic ne perdiderit, non cessat perdere lusus,
> Dum revocat cupidas curia blanda manus.'
> Hoc etiam adjiciendum puto, quod sicut aleae, sic et curiae casus, delectu carens, dignis et indignis aeque respondet.
>
> The life at court is just like a game of dice, for as the poet [Ovid] says:
> 'The coaxing dice attract the gambler's greedy hand:
> He may not have lost already, but he loses in the end.'[89]
> Make one small change in this and you can say in the same way:
> 'The court with its attractions grips tight his greedy hands:
> If he's not done so already, he wastes the time he spends.'
> It is worth adding, or so I think, that playing at dice and frequenting the court are similar in the prizes which they offer: neither leads to contentment, both reward with complete impartiality the worthy and the unworthy.[90]

John of Salisbury made his views on the court equally emphatic in the Prologue to the *Policraticus*, where he too championed the world of philosophy in comparison with the ways of the court:

> Ego enim contempno quae illi aulici ambiunt, et quae ego ambio illi contempnunt ... Iam enim annis fere duodecim nugatum esse taedet et penitet me longe aliter institutum; et quasi sacratioris

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[88] Gerald of Wales, 'De rebus a se gestis', *Opera*, ed. J.S.Brewer (RS 1; London, 1861), III.1, p.90.
[89] Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, ed. A.S.Hollis (Oxford, 1977), ll.451-2.
[90] Gerald of Wales, 'Itinerarium Kambriae', *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J.F.Dimock (RS: 6; London, 1868), First Preface; L.Thorpe (trans.), *The Journey Through Wales/ The Description of Wales* (London, 1978), pp.66-7.

> philosophiae lactatum uberibus ablactatumque decuerat ad philosophantium transisse cetum quam ad collegia nugatorum.
>
> I despise that which the courtiers embrace, and what I embrace they despise ... I loathe and regret that at the moment almost twelve years have been squandered, despite extensive training for a different life; and as it were, being suckled at the teat of a more sacred philosophy, it is appropriate that one should pass into the company of philosophers rather than of courtiers.[91]

Another example of the very real consequences of falling out of favour at court is provided by the account of Thomas Brown (d.1180) in the *Dialogus de Scaccario*. Brown enjoyed a key position at court in Sicily until the death of Roger II in 1154, at which point he was expelled from the court:

> Magnus hic erat in magni regis Siculi curia consiliis prouidus et in regiis secretis pene precipuus. Surrexit interea rex nouus qui ignorabat illum, qui praua habens latera patrem persequebatur in suis. Compulsus est igitur uir iste, mutatis rebus prosperis, uite sue consulere.
>
> He was a great man at the court of the great King of Sicily, a prudent counsellor, and almost at the head of the King's confidential business. Now there arose a new king who knew not Thomas, one who kept bad company and persecuted his father in the persons of his servants. So Thomas fell from power and had to flee for his life.[92]

This third-person account illustrates the dependence of courtiers upon the favour of the court leader. Brown subsequently took up a key position at the Exchequer, where he held office by virtue of a special order of the command of the king.[93]

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[91] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb, I, Prologue, p.14; Nederman (trans.), *Policraticus*, p.4.
[92] R.FitzNigel, *Dialogus de Scaccario: The Dialogue of the Exchequer*, ed. and trans. C.Johnson (Oxford, 1983), pp.35-6.
[93] R.L.Poole, *The Exchequer in the Twelfth Century* (London, 1912), p.116.

In their various disadvantaged positions, these men would feel particularly keenly the difficulties caused by the nature of life at court. Indeed it is perhaps the competitiveness of court life which we have witnessed in chronicles and chivalric romances which drove them to their negative positions. Yet court critics wrote for court audiences. What was the impact of these works, and can we gauge the reactions of contemporaries? Evidence suggests that there was in fact some resistance to the unfavourable portrayal of courtiers. After leaving the court, Peter of Blois, who was not known for being the most reticent of men in his opinions, wrote a letter which was strongly critical of Henry II's clerics. Yet Peter found that he was forced to retract some of his more scathing comments when members of the court wrote to him in defence of their positions.[94] This demonstrates the power of positive views of the court which were upheld alongside views about its corruption.

Having established the admirable qualities of the court as portrayed in chivalric romances, and the contemptible elements according to court satire, it now remains to investigate whether these points of view existed in polarity. The ambition and indulgence of courtiers, and their consequent moral laxity, were principal complaints made by critics of the court, and the riches and beautiful clothes enjoyed by knights, and the chivalric ideals of mercy and courteous behaviour, are translated into vanity, weakness and deceitfulness. The representations of the court in chivalric romances and court satire clearly reflect

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[94] The letter no longer exists, but Peter's response gives clues as to the original content: Peter of Blois, 'Epistolae', Letter 150, PL 207, 439-42.

opinions about the court and its knights which were in conflict. Some of the texts appear to register a resistance to the chivalrous court described in romances: is there any way in which these may be reconciled?

A comparison of portrayals of the court in satire and romances does not only reveal areas of disparity. I want now to explore some passages in chivalric romances which suggest a connection between the apparently polarised viewpoints. A passage in Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligés* is of particular interest in this light. Fenice, the love-struck heroine, is bemoaning the departure of Cligés, who is setting out to the English court. Before leaving, Cligés told Fenice that he was 'wholly devoted' to her, and Fenice now ponders upon the meaning of these words, wondering whether Cligés, the 'master' of her heart, was flattering her, or whether he was sincere. Her musings on love take an interesting turn when she describes them in terms of the relationships between men at court:

> S'or set bien servir de losenge,
> Si com an doit servir a cort,
> Molt iert riches, einz qu'il s'an tort.
> Qui vialt de son seignor bien estre
> Et delez lui seoir a destre,
> Si com il est us et costume,
> Del chief li doit oster la plume,
> Neïs quant il n'en i a point. (ll.4482-9)

> If he is skilled in the use of flattery, as one must be at court, then he will be rich before he returns. Whoever wishes to be in his lord's good graces and sit at his right hand, as is the custom and habit of our days, must pick the feather from his head, even when there isn't one.[95]

[95] Kibler, p.178.

According to Fenice's diatribe, there is an intrinsic link between flattery and favour at court. A courtier must be seen to be paying attention to his lord at all times; gaining favour is so important that even if there is not a problem, then one can always be imagined, in order that it may then be solved.

The similarity with court satire is striking, and in fact a direct connection may be proved by looking at a topos employed by Chrétien de Troyes in this passage, namely the image of an imaginary feather which is brushed away by an adoring courtier. This motif originates in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*;[96] but it is notable that Chrétien seems to be in touch with a contemporary, late twelfth-century, tradition, in which the motif is specifically applied to the English court. This tradition is exemplified by Walter Map. The *De Palpone et Assentatore* attributed to Walter Map employed the topos of imaginary feathers:

> Ad latus principis stat palpo blandiens,
> adaptans clamidem, vestemque poliens,
> et invisibiles plumas decutiens,
> invisa luteo visu conspiciens.[97] (ll.271-4)

A similar set of images can also be found in the *Itinerarium Kambriae* of Gerald of Wales, which was addressed to Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (1207-28). Gerald places himself in direct opposition to these sycophants:

> Non itaque pileum sustinendo, non pulvillum supponendo, non plumam extrahendo, non pulverum, etsi nullus fuerit, excutiendo, sed inter alios palpones tibi scribendo placere constitui.
>
> However, it is not by standing cap in hand that I have tried to please you, not by placing a cushion for you to sit on, by pulling a feather out of the said cushion lest it irk you, by flicking off you a

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[96] Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, ll.149-51.

[97] Walter Map, 'De Palpone et Assentatore', in *Poems*, ed. Wright, pp.114-15. For a discussion of the masters' attitudes to flattery, see also Baldwin, *Masters*, I, p.177.

particle of dust which was not there anyway. You are completely hemmed in by flatterers of this sort.[98]

Chrétien de Troyes therefore employed a well-known symbol of court flattery in a description of the English court, to which Cligés was travelling. Was Chrétien thinking of the court of Henry II? It is possible that Chrétien himself was present at the court of Henry II during the early stages of his writing career,[99] and the inclusion of this passage of satire on the court in a love-lament appears to have been a deliberate move on the part of Chrétien de Troyes.

The link between romance and court satire is not restricted to the image of the imaginary feather. As Fenice continues, her description of the court increasingly tallies with court satires. Courtiers do not only flatter their lords, but they are even prepared to lie:

Mes ici a un malvés point:
Car il aplaigne par defors,
Et se il a dedanz le cors
Ne malvestié, ne vilenie,
Ja n'iert tant cortoise qu'il li die,
Eiz fera cuidier et antendre
Qu'a lui ne se porroit nus prandre
De proesce ne de savoir.
Si cuide cil qu'il dïe voir,
Car quant il est fel et enrievres,
Malvès, et coarz come lievres,
Chiches, et fos, et contrefez,

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[98] Gerald of Wales, 'Itinerarium Kambriae', First Preface; Thorpe (trans.), *The Journey Through Wales/ The Description of Wales*, p.69.

[99] Schmolke-Hasselmann argues convincingly that *Erec et Enide* was written for the English court, and also highlights the fact that the future Henry II spent several childhood years with his uncle, Robert of Gloucester, one of the addressees of Geoffrey's *Historia*. Another historical figure, Brian of Wallingford, who was a companion and supporter of Henry, can be linked with *Erec et Enide* in the figure of Brian des Illes, who is described as having given the decorated thrones as a gift to Erec and Enide: *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, pp.232-40. Kibler links the Troyes and English courts further through Henry of Blois, who was the uncle of Henry the Liberal and who held the positions of abbot of Glastonbury and bishop of Winchester. Henry of Blois knew Geoffrey of Monmouth and William of Malmesbury: Kibler, pp.5-6.

Et vilains an diz et an fez,
Le prise par devant et loe
Tiex qui derriers li fet la moe. (ll.4490-504)

But there is a contrary side to this: even after he has smoothed down his lord's hair the servant does not have the courtesy to tell his lord of any wickedness and evil within him but lets him believe and understand that no one is comparable to him in valour and in knowledge, and his lord believes he speaks the truth. A man is blinded to his real self if he believes what others tell him of qualities he doesn't possess. Even if he is wicked and cruel, cowardly and spineless as a hare, stingy, crazy, and misshapen, and evil in both words and deeds, still someone will praise him to his face and then laugh at him behind his back.[100]

'Courtesy' is not a virtue of these courtiers, who flatter their lords with false words. Furthermore, this is done not for any good reason, but instead is fuelled by the desire to hold him to ridicule. Fenice's discussion of the court finishes with the following statement:

se ses sires vialt mantir,
Cil est prez del tot consantir.
Qui les corz et les seignors onge
Servir le covient de mançonge. (ll.4511-14)

Should his lord wish to lie, he is quite ready to back him up and his tongue is never slow to proclaim the truth of whatever his master says. Anyone who frequents courts and lords must be ready to serve with lies.[101]

Truth and the court clearly do not make good bedfellows. This is an extremely interesting sequence, which occurs unexpectedly and links court satires and romances in suggesting that relationships at court were insecure and generated

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[100] Kibler, p.178.
[101] Kibler, p.178. Note also the comment made in the *First Continuation*: 'Tiex est ataïneus/ Qui au besoing an vaut bien deus,/ Et tiex hom blandist part costume/ Qui annaiente come escume' ('An abrasive man can be worth twenty-two of pleasant speech who are faint-hearted and worthless and weak when it comes to action; for a man whose custom is to flatter melts away like foam when help is needed urgently': ll.165-8).

rivalry. I now want to investigate the implications of these similarities in chivalric romances and court satire by looking at a broader theme shared by the two genres: the inactive warrior.

We have already witnessed the concerns of court satirists that knights did not fulfil their proper duties as warriors. Inactivity is also a key theme in chivalric romances. Although accounts which are critical of the court were written by those who were in some way detached from it, either geographically like Fenice, or morally like Walter Map or John of Salisbury, chivalric romances also hold up to close examination those courts which are the centre of chivalric action. The Flemish romance of *Perlesvaus*, which was written in the early thirteenth century as a continuation of Chrétien's story of the *Conte du Graal*, demonstrates a standpoint on knightly bravery and vanity which at first seems comparable to that of the satirists. It personifies knightly inactivity in the figure of the Coward Knight, who comes riding towards Gawain seated in a peculiar backwards position on his horse, with his shield upside-down, and pleads with Gawain not to hurt him.[102] The Coward Knight has no intention of performing in battle, and the pristine condition of his weapons is due to the fact that he never uses them. This presents a picture which is very similar to the accusations made by Peter of Blois about knights who paint battles on their shields in order that they may experience a 'fantasy' of battle, rather than embarking on the real thing. The author of the romance presents this avoidance of warfare as

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[102] *Le Haut Livre*, Branch IV, l.1367.

laughable, and thus appears to have similar views to the satirists with regard to knightly prowess.

The theme of knightly inactivity is also taken on by Chrétien in *Le Chevalier au Lion*. At the beginning of the story Arthur is holding a grand court at Carlisle, and the knight Calogrenant tells a tale to a group of knights about a defeat in combat which he had suffered previously. When Yvain promises to avenge Calogrenant, Kay the Seneschal heaps scorn upon this idea, accusing Yvain of empty boasting. Thus Chrétien de Troyes introduces the possibility that even Arthur's court contains boastful men who are not prepared to be true knightly warriors.[103] Interestingly, though, the other courtiers consider the seneschal's comments to be nothing more than malicious gossip: in the words of Calogrenant,

a mialz vaillant et a plus sage,
mes sire Kex, que je ne sui,
avez vos dit honte et enui,
car bien an estes costumiers.
Toz jorz doit puïr li fumiers,
et toons poindre, et maloz bruire,
et felons enuier et nuire. (ll.112-18)

You have spoken your slander and spite to braver and wiser men than I, my lord Kay, for you do it habitually. The dungheap will always smell, wasps will always sting and hornets buzz, and a cad will always slander and vex others.[104]

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[103] Gowans highlights changing social attitudes as a reason for the misinterpretation of earlier Celtic representations of Kay, in which his boastful and aggressive nature would have been a characteristic of a good warrior, but which now diminishes him to a figure of spitefulness: *Cei*, esp.pp.37ff.
[104] Kibler, p.296.

This example of slander is interesting in the light of the comments made by Walter Map and John of Salisbury about gossip at the court, and the predatory nature of court positions witnessed earlier. But if Chrétien de Troyes is recognising here the backbiting courtiers described in historical works, then by putting their critical words into the mouth of Kay and then ridiculing the seneschal, he marginalises critics of the court. Rather like those men who objected to the censure of Peter of Blois, the actions of knights like Calogrenant allow values of honour to be upheld and villainy to be banished. In this way criticisms of the court are acknowledged, but then defeated.

This is not to say that chivalric romances do not appreciate the serious concerns of court satirists regarding the behaviour of knights. For example, in Chrétien de Troyes's chivalric romances knights are not faultless exemplars of chivalric ideals, but need to perform chivalric deeds constantly in order to deserve their reputations. Indeed they are highly aware of this need, and are even criticised by their own comrades if they fail to perform knightly acts. In *Erec et Enide*, the hero's love for his new wife Enide becomes a point of mockery among the knights of the court when Erec begins to neglect chivalric deeds. In a similar fashion in *Le Chevalier au Lion*, Gawain persuades Yvain to leave his new wife Laudine in pursuit of chivalric deeds, with the argument that without this Yvain risks losing his reputation, and thus the admiration and affections of his wife.[105] It is through such deeds that knights are able to constantly demonstrate their virtues, and through which the court of Arthur maintains its

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[105] See Chapter Two.

values: values which the audiences of romance are clearly intended to share. Chivalric romance and satire are in agreement with regard to the importance of chivalric activity. The difference is that the individual's place in relation to his communal environment is unstable in satires, but in romances it is strengthened by the membership of a court society and the assertion of knightly values therein.

Yet it is not sufficient for a knight in chivalric romance simply to perform acts of military prowess, and this is where Chrétien brings together the two strains of courteous behaviour and knightly reputation which are effectively separated by court satirists. In promoting a courteous and refined court, the chivalric romances do not argue for a life of inactivity, of the kind of which court satirists accused knights. Rather they encourage knights to consider the relevance and appropriateness of an action, as opposed to just reacting with violence. Chivalric romances take on board some of the problems of inactivity and the tensions which were sometimes created by conflicting expectations, but their images of the courtly and chivalric knight are not contradictory. In contrast with the criticisms levelled at knights by Peter of Blois, a knight of Chrétien's romances can be both courtly and heroic.[106]

In conclusion, I want to turn to another passage in the *Perlesvaus* which demonstrates the point at which chivalric romances and court satires part

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[106] 'Courtesy' is in fact a key word. In *Cligés*, the appeal of Arthur's court to Alexander is not due simply to its grandeur and scale, or its reputation for brave fighting, for closely bound up in the fame of the court are also its behavioural values. Knights who fail to adhere to these codes of conduct are often described using a term which means the opposite of courtesy, 'vilenie', and such knights often resort to unjustified violence. This term is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

company. We have already witnessed the opposition of this text to cowardly knights, and noted its apparent similarities with court satire. Yet the *Perlesvaus* does not equate attendance at court with bad knights, as court satires did. The poem opens with a description of how Arthur has lost his desire to hold court at Christmas, Easter or Pentecost, and is also failing to promote knightly deeds. The social and political importance of court gatherings explored earlier is surely proven in this text, when the good knights in turn begin to neglect their good deeds of chivalry, and leave Arthur's court, so that its numbers are reduced from three hundred and seventy to twenty-five.

For just as the good reputation of Arthur's court is known throughout the land in chivalric romances, so now the news of the degradation of his court is widespread, and tarnishes the reputations of his knights. As a maiden unwittingly tells the king himself, on hearing that his name is Arthur, 'or vos haz plus que devant, car vos avez le non de plus mauvés roi du mont' ('I have less respect for you now: for you have the name of the worst king in the world').[107] She extends this censure to Sir Gawain, exclaiming that he is descended from the 'worst king alive!' ('poieur roi qui soit').[108] Where once association with the court of the valorous Arthur would have brought his knights great renown, it now brings them shame. It seems that, like court satire, this romance is keen to promote the importance of knightly deeds, and the seriousness of not having an exemplary court.

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[107] *Le Haut Livre*, Branch I, ll.518-9; *High Book*, p.31.
[108] *Le Haut Livre*, Branch III, l.923-4; *High Book*, p.42.

Yet the proposed cure for Arthur's negligence differs in a fundamental way from the stance of court satire. Arthur is told by a hermit that he must atone for his idleness at court:

> si devroit a voz toz li mondes prendre essanple de bien fere e de largesse e d'oneur: e vos estes li essanples de vilenie fere a toz les riches homes qui ore sont.
>
> You should be an example to all the world of valour and great deeds and honour; yet you are the example of baseness to all living men.[109]

After this encounter, Arthur hears a voice in the forest telling him that God has commanded that he must hold court.[110] The fact that it is the will of God lends further consequence to the holding of a grand court. On arriving back at Cardueil, eager for noble deeds, Arthur arranges a large feast at Pennevoiseuse to celebrate the festival of Saint John, to which he summons great numbers of lords and knights. Thus while satirists recommend leaving the court entirely, in the *Perlesvaus* it is by reuniting his court through a large secular court festival that Arthur redeems some of his lost power, and the esteem of the chivalric world. The need for knightly activity drives both the court satires and the chivalric romances, but the stances on the relationships of knights and the court, and the demonstration of values at court, are not shared.

This romance provides another example of the central role of court gatherings in the assertion and maintenance of knightly identity and reputation. The importance of the court as a place of chivalric deeds, and the exemplary role

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[109] *Le Haut Livre*, Branch I, ll.334-7; *High Book*, p.27.
[110] *Le Haut Livre*, Branch I, ll.540-44; *High Book*, p.32.

of the chivalric leader, are made clear. This romance, like the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, does not set up the court as an uncontested arena of ideal chivalry which contrasts with the gritty realism of court satire. Rather these works show that chivalric values are in need of constant practice, and that the court and its gatherings are central to the promotion of chivalric values.

This study of problems at the court reveals a set of concerns regarding rivalry, stability and morality which were actually shared by the authors of court satire and chivalric romance. Yet while in satirical works knights are in moral danger when attending court, in chivalric romances knights are directly responsible for ensuring the high moral standard of the court of King Arthur, and their association with the court in turn increases their reputations. The study confirms that knightly ideals were recognised at court, and that chivalric romances engaged with contemporary problems. The message of heroism promoted in the romances shows that Chrétien has successfully civilised his warriors without reducing their physical prowess. Life at court is still full of pressures, but fighting action and courtesy are blended in the best warriors. We are encouraged to identify with the knights and to admire them, and to find joy in the luxuries of the court as they did.

1.iii. The Court as a School of Chivalric Learning

Two aspects of the court have been discussed, the ceremonial functions of the court, and the rivalries and tensions which existed at court as they find

expression in romance and court satire. This section investigates the court as a place where chivalric ideals were inculcated formally. It does this by exploring the education of noble children at courts in the twelfth century, and the availability and circulation at court of manuscripts dealing with knightly life. Was learnedness itself a valued attribute in knights, and how did knights come into contact with chivalric ideals?

It was common practice in the twelfth century for the son of a nobleman to be sent away to the court of a great nobleman in order to acquire an education prior to knighthood. This education may have begun as early as the age of 6 or 7, and it consisted of training in both military skills and life at court. Count Baldwin V of Hainaut (d.1195) sent his son to the German court to learn the language and the 'customs of the court'.[111] Arnold of Ardres was sent to the court of Philip of Flanders for such training, and the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* shows that William Marshal, the tutor in chivalry of Henry the young king, was brought up in the Normandy household of the chamberlain William of Tancarville, who was a great patron of knights. Prince Louis (the future Louis VI) also received his knighthood away from his home environment.[112]

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[111] Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p.234.

[112] R.Cusimano and J.Moorhead (trans.) *The Deeds of Louis the Fat* (Washington, 1992), p.8. Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis claimed that Louis, unlike 'most boys at this age', preferred practicing with weapons to hunting: *Vita Ludovici Grossi Regis*, H.Wacquet (ed.), *Vie de Louis le Gros*, (Paris, 1929), c.1, p.6. Peter Abelard's father, who was himself a knight, took care over his son's education: see L.Grane, *Peter Abelard, Philosophy and Christianity in the Middle Ages* (London, 1970); for more on Abelard, see M.T.Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford, 1997). The children of noblemen were fostered at the court of Thomas Becket: R.Thomson,'What is the 'Entheticus'?', in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. M.Wilks (Oxford, 1994), pp.287-301.

Chivalric romances reflect this historical trend, with young men such as the emperor's son in *Cligés* travelling away from home to learn the skills and virtues of knighthood at Arthur's court. This supports the idea that the portrayal of the chivalric court in romances reflected and promoted a civilising process which was actually taking place in historical courts in the twelfth century.

I want to begin the analysis of learning at court by examining the nature of the education experienced by boys at court, as represented in chronicles and chivalric romances. What significance might be attached to the ways in which knights learned, and the subject matter they studied? A knight or cleric appointed as a master would often teach several boys together as a group. These teaching patterns could result in strong relationships forming between a tutee and his master, or between peers. Aristocratic education was characterised by the teaching of a breadth of subjects, and a diversity of skills.[113]

The skills learned by young noblemen in preparation for life at court were a combination of text-based learning and outdoor pursuits. Court activities such as hunting, and fighting techniques were taught along with the study of letters. Latin was one key part of their education, beginning with the alphabet, and leading up to composition work. One popular didactic text, the *Disciplina clericalis*, written in the early twelfth century by the scientist and theologian Peter Alfonso (d.c.1140), described the seven liberal arts, the seven principles,

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[113] For a detailed study of the education of young boys and girls of the English medieval aristocracy, see: N.Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530* (London, 1984).

and the seven 'knightly pursuits', which are interestingly defined as 'riding, swimming, archery, boxing, hawking, chess, and the writing of poetry'.[114]

A knightly education was intellectual, moral, military, and spiritual. Didactic texts were popular in twelfth-century northern France and knights would have come into contact with courtesy books, some of which were used for schooling. The Latin courtesy books first appeared in the twelfth century and were used in the schools for the purposes of teaching Latin. They were soon followed by versions in the vernacular, to which noble households would have had access.[115] The *Disticha Catonis*, from the third century AD, was one popular school-text, known and respected by writers familiar with Latin, and it was used and adapted throughout the Middle Ages.[116] The Latin courtesy book, the *Facetus 'cum nihil utilius'* (c.1180), often found as a continuation to the *Disticha Catonis*, was also used.[117] Religion and Latin grammar, or courtesy and Latin grammar, would be learned together, by means of these texts.

Noble and chivalric pursuits such as hunting and tourneying, which were an important part of court life, required training, as did courtly etiquette. Chivalric romances reflect the importance of a mastery of courtesy as well as of military deeds, and they provide some interesting descriptions of the education of nobles. I want now to turn to some of these examples of noble education in

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[114] Peter Alfonso, *Disciplina Clericalis*, ed. A.Hilka and W.Söderhjelm (Helsinki, 1911), exemplum IV, pp.10-11 (11).
[115] J.Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp.72-3.
[116] W.J.Chase, 'The Distichs of Cato: A Famous Medieval Textbook', *University of Wisconsin Studies in the Social Sciences and History,* 7 (Madison, 1922), pp.2-4.
[117] See Chapter Four for further discussion of this text.

chivalric romances. One source of information which has been overlooked is the story of *Philomena et Procné*,[118] which was taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This work is found in a thirteenth-century *Ovide moralisé*, and is thought to be an early work - possibly a school exercise - of Chrétien de Troyes.[119] Although the attribution of this text to Chrétien de Troyes is debated, it is not unlikely: the name 'Crestiiens li Gois' appears in the text of the poem (l.734) and at the beginning of *Cligés*, Chrétien de Troyes mentioned that he had written a version of what he calls the 'change of the hoopoe, the swallow, and the nightingale' ('de la hupe et de l'aronde/ Et del rossignol la muance', ll.6-7). Textual similarities between this poem and Chrétien de Troyes's Arthurian romances have also been observed.[120]

This romance is interesting for its description of the education of the heroine: it must be noted that her accomplishments are perhaps unusual for a woman in the twelfth century, but they still offer an illustration of the scope of noble education generally offered to boys. The portrait of Philomena begins as a conventional description of a female in romances, being a physical description of her body and her beauty (ll.127-69).[121] This heroine is also wise, however: as

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[118] *Three Ovidian Tales of Love: Piramus et Tisbé, Narcisus et Dané, and Philomena et Procné*, ed. and trans. R.Cormier (New York, 1986).

[119] J.Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: The Man and His Work*, trans. R.J.Cormier (Athens, Ohio, 1982), pp.49-50.

[120] On the issue of attribution, see: M-C.Gérard-Zai, 'L'Auteur de *Philomena*', *Revue de Istorie si Teorie Literara,* 25 (1976), pp.361-8; F.Zaman, *L'Attribution de 'Philomena' à Chrétien de Troyes* (Amsterdam, 1928); R.Lev, 'Etat présent des études sur l'attribution de *Philomena*', *Lettres Romanes*, 5 (1951), pp.46-52.

[121] For a detailed discussion of the description of Philomena, see A.M.Colby, *The Portrait in Twelfth-Century French Literature: An Example of the Stylistic Originality of Chrétien de Troyes*, (Genève, 1965), pp.122-38.

wise as she is beautiful, in fact: 'Nu fu mains sage que bele' (l.172). Philomena is knowledgeable 'in all that a young women should be' ('sot quanque doit savoir pucele', l.171). We now discover what a young woman's 'proper' knowledge consists of, as the poet begins to describe Philomena's social attainments. Philomena is an expert at chess, and other noble pursuits: more so, in fact, than other well-known hero figures:

Plus sot de joie et de deport
Qu'Apoloines ne que Tristanz:
Plus an sot voire voir dis tanz.
Des tables sot et des eschas,
Del vieil jeu et des eschas,
De la bufe et de la hamee.
Por son deduit estoit amee
Et requise de hauz barons. (ll.174-9)

She knew more about games and amusements - ten times more - than Apollonius or Tristan. She could play checkers and chess, the old six and ace game, and she knew the slap and trap game too. Because of her love of pleasures she was eyed and courted by high noblemen.[122]

Philomena does not just partake in these noble pleasures: she excels at them, and she attracts men in doing so. The author does not stop here, however: having described her knowledge of falconry, hunting, fishing, and embroidery, he then illustrates her knowledge of literature:

Des autors sot et de grameire
Et sot bien feire vers et letre,
Et, quant li plot, li antremetre
Et del sautier et de la lire:
Plus an sot qu'an ne porroit dire,
Et de la gigue et de la rote.
Soz ciel n'a lai ne son ne note
Qu'el ne seüst bien vieler,
Et tant sot sagement parler

[122] *Philomena*, ed. and trans. Cormier, p.209.

Que solemant de sa parole
Seüst ele tenir escole. (ll.194-204)

She knew her Latin authors and how to compose verse and prose: and if she pleased, she could accompany them with psaltery and lyre. Better than one could describe could she pluck or play the vielle; and she could strum any lay or tune or note at will. She knew how to speak so wisely that by words alone she could teach.[123]

This young noblewoman appears to have had the benefits of teaching which noble boys experienced: she is familiar with the Latin authors, knows Latin grammar and composition, and furthermore she is able to teach others through her own wise speech. Her argument with Tereus is also in the dialectic mode.[124] By describing her in such terms, the poet enhances the tragedy and also the baseness of her rape by Tereus. It is highly significant that knowledge should be an important part of this noble's appeal; and this shows that it was not unthinkable that a woman should obtain such knowledge.[125]

Another romance which describes the education of young people is *Floire et Blancheflor.*[126] This anonymous romance was produced between 1150-70 and one of the surviving manuscripts (A) exists in a key collection of medieval romance.[127] The romance tells the story of the birth and the growing-up of Floire and Blancheflor, and the great love which grows between them. The

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[123] *Philomena*, ed. and trans. Cormier, p.209.
[124] *Philomena*, ed. and trans. Cormier, ll.275-319; Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p.51.
[125] For the role of women as readers and teachers, see M.T.Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1993), p.245; J.Blacker, '"Dame Custance La Gentil": Gaimar's Portrait of a Lady and her Books', *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, Proceedings of the Borchard Conference on Anglo-Norman History, 1995, ed. C.W.Hollister (Woodbridge, 1997), pp.109-119.
[126] *Floire et Blancheflor*, ed. J-L.LeClanche, CFMA (Paris, 1980).
[127] MS 375. For a description of this manuscript see A.Micha, *La tradition manuscrite des romans de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris, 1939), pp.29-32.

names Floire and Blancheflor became legendary, and references to these figures in other works from the twelfth century and onwards suggest the popularity of the romance in its own time.[128] The poem opens with an indication of its anticipated audience: 'Lords and lovers, maidens and knights, gentle damsels and young lords' (ll.1-4). In fact, the story existed in two versions: the so-called 'aristocratic' poem, and the later, slightly longer 'popular' version, which contains accounts of wars and tournaments not in the original.

Floire and Blancheflor live at the court of King Fenix and his queen. Floire is the son of the king and queen, and Blancheflor is the daughter of the queen's maid, who was captured by Fenix's knights during his raids in Galicia. The maid's father, a noble knight, was killed and his daughter, who was pregnant and a widow, was given by Fenix to his queen. Floire and Blancheflor were born on the same day, and are brought up together, by Blancheflor's mother. When Floire is five years old, the king sees that it is time for his son to be educated:

> Quant li rois vit son fil si bel,
> de son eage damoisel,
> et aperçut que sot entendre,
> a letres le vaut faire aprendre. (ll.201-4)

He arranges to send Floire to a good clerk of his own household called Gaidon, who is well-bred and educated (ll.195-203). Floire is very upset, however, at being separated from Blancheflor, and so the king ordains that the girl should be

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[128] See M.J.Hubert (trans.), *The Romance of Floire and Blanchefleur: A French Idyllic Poem of the Twelfth Century*, Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 63 (Chapel Hill, 1966), pp.21-2.

educated too. Thus the young boy and girl learn together. They progress well, mastering Ovid at an extremely young age. Like Philomena, their education includes the classics: 'En aprendre avoient boin sens/ du retenir millor porpens/ Livres lisoient paienors' (ll.229-31).[129] Floire and Blancheflor are also able to compose verses and letters on tablets of ivory, using styluses of gold and silver:

> Adont lor veïssiés escrire
> letres et vers d'amours en cire!
> Los graffes sont d'or et d'argent
> dont il escrisent soutiument. (ll.257-62)

So it is that in just over five years the pair learn to speak and write Latin;

notably the nobles around them cannot understand their talk:

> furent andoi si bien apris
> que bien sorent parler latin
> et bien escrire en parkemin,
> et consillier oiant la gent
> en latin, que nus nes entent. (ll.264-8).

While their main incentive to learn appears to be their love for each other, and they seem very young to be learning such advanced Latin, still it is significant that it is seen to be proper that the king's son is educated in this manner, and the description of the noble education in Latin and composition also mirrors what we have observed previously about patterns of learning at court.[130]

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[129] Caradoc, whose story appears in the *First Continuation*, also has a teacher at the age of five, 'to develop his valour and intelligence'. Within four years he has 'surpassed his master', and at ten joins his uncle's entourage in England. King Arthur himself teaches Caradoc to perform noble sports and games, and to be courteous: *The First Continuation*, ed. Roach and Ivy, ll.6884-922; Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, pp.7-8.

[130] In fact it is a concern about noble status which drives the king to send Floire away to school at Montoire, where the queen's sister lives, when he discovers that his son has fallen in love with Blancheflor, who is of low status (*Floire et Blancheflor*, ll.1434-6).

How did these elements of education carry across into the lives of grown knights? Evidence from twelfth-century texts demonstrates that learnedness became an important part of the ideology of the good knight in the twelfth century. The topos of *translatio studii*, the transmission of learning from one social area to another, was taken on by writers such as Gerald of Wales and Chrétien de Troyes, and was sometimes explicitly linked with the growth of chivalry. In *Cligés*, Chrétien de Troyes talks of the simultaneous arrival of knowledge and chivalry in France:

> Ce nos ont nostre livre apris
> Qu'an Grece ot de *chevalerie*
> Le premier los et de *clergie.*
> Puis vint chevalerie a Rome
> Et de la clergie la some,
> Qui or est an France venue. (ll.25-33, my emphases)
>
> Our books have taught us that chivalry and learning first flourished in Greece; then to Rome came chivalry and the sum of knowledge, which now has come to France.[131]

The link between chivalry and learning is emphasised by the appearance of 'chevalerie' and 'clergie' as a rhyming pair. The tying together of these two phrases is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that in some works *clergie* was used to denote literate clerics, and *illiteratus* was synonymous with layman. Yet the difference between these two groups was often not as clear-cut as the terms might suggest.[132] While some objected to what they saw as the corruption of the term *litteratus*, in its being applied to other social groups, others saw in the blending of military and learned fields the creation of a better

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[131] Kibler, p.123.
[132] Clanchy, *From Memory*, pp.226-30.

knight, and they reflect this in their use of language: in the words of Philip of Harvengt, 'Non enim scientiae fortis militia'.[133] Some churchmen were indeed drawn to chivalry, even against their better judgment,[134] an issue which will be explored further below.

The evidence suggests that it was important for knights or court leaders to have a reputation for learning. Patronage was an important part of the description of royal function,[135] and in the twelfth century it became a role of the lay aristocracy. The courts provided an arena for knights to have access to this culture. Henry the Liberal of Champagne and Philip of Flanders were celebrated for their interest in learning, as well as for their chivalric accomplishments. The importance of the knowledge and the patronage of literate princes were highlighted by Gerald of Wales. He championed the cause of literature and learning. A number of men are praised in his dedications for their interest in literature, while others bear the brunt of his censure:

> Sed quia principibus parum literatis et multum occupatis, *Hibernicam* Anglorum regi Henrico secundo *Topographiam*, ejusdemque filio, et utinam vitiorum non succedaneo, Pictavensium comiti Ricardo *Vaticinalem Historiam*, vacuo quondam quoad accessorium illud et infructuoso labore peregi.[136]
>
> I completely wasted my time when I wrote my Topography of Ireland for Henry II [1188], King of the English, and the companion volume, my Vaticinal History, [pre-1189] for Richard

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[133] Philip of Harvengt, 'Epistolae', letter 16, PL 203, 149. See also Lambert of Ardres on Arnold: 'moribus erundiendus et miliataribus officiis diligenter imbuendus et introducendus': 'Historia comitum Ghisnensium', ed. I.Heller, MGH SS 24, p.603; Duby, 'The Culture', pp.253-4.

[134] See A.Putter, 'Knights and Clerics at the Court of Champagne: Chretien de Troyes's Romances in Context', *Medieval Knighthood*, V (1995), pp.258-62; also Chapter Two of this thesis.

[135] M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A.Manyon, 2 vols. (Frome, 1961), I, p.79.

[136] Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Kambriae*, First Preface; Thorpe (trans.), *Journey Through Wales*, pp.67-8.

> of Poitou, his son and successor in vice, although I would prefer not to have to say it. Both these princes had little or no interest in literature, and both were much preoccupied with other matters.

In *De Principis Instructione* Gerald cites Louis VIII as a preferred patron:

> tum quia litteris et liberalibus studiis affatim est a teneris annis imbutus (quae virtus quidem, quanto in principibus est hodie rarior, tanto, ubi affuerit, longe pretiosior et praeclarior), tum etiam quia liberalitate conspicuus; quae duo revera, tanquam aurum gemmae, sic principis animum decenter exornant.
>
> both because he is sufficiently instructed from his tender years in letters and liberal studies (which virtue, by how much the more rare it is in princes, at the present day, is by far the more valuable and illustrious where it is found), and also because he is conspicuous for liberality; which two qualities, in truth, adorn the mind of a prince, as jewels adorn the gold in which they are set.[137]

Although the author Gerald may be considered biased in his praise, it is still clear that he was promoting literature as a very important cause, and he also directly linked the military successes of a secular leader with his literary knowledge:

> Quam sint autem principibus appetibilia litterarum notitia liberaliaque studia, principum electorum exempla docent et ad hoc invitant evidentissima, qui quanto litteratiores erant et eruditiores, tanto in rebus bellicis animosiores exstiterant et strenuiores.
>
> But how a knowledge of letters, and liberal studies, are things worthy to be desired by princes, the examples of those princes which are selected show, and most evidently invite to this pursuit; who, the more literary and learned they were, the more courageous and active they proved themselves in all warlike affairs.[138]

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[137] Gerald of Wales, 'De Principis Instructione', First Preface; J.Stevenson (trans.), *On the Instruction of Princes* (Felinfach, 1991), p.8.
[138] Gerald of Wales, 'De Principis Instructione', First Preface; Stevenson, *On the Instruction*, pp.8-9.

Count Henry of Champagne had a great reputation both for learning and for chivalry: as Philip of Harvengt put it, 'miles nobilis, princepsque militum, sic amas et honoras milites loricatos, ut clericali more diligas litteras, benigne colligas litteratos'.[139] Henry of Champagne is thus a figure who represented the marriage of clerical and knightly values, having the reputation of a fighting knight while also being praised for his learnedness. At the courts of twelfth-century northern France, an interest in philosophy seems to have counted very much in a layman's favour. John of Salisbury wrote a letter to Henry the Liberal, in which he described the count's interest in matters of philosophy and learning (as well as his competence in Latin).[140] Just as chivalric values are instilled by Arthur in the *Perlesvaus*, so Henry the Liberal embodied the principal chivalric virtues of largesse and of learnedness. In his *Policraticus*, John of Salisbury highlighted the importance to leaders of being well versed in letters.[141] In the aforementioned *Bible* of Guiot de Provins, which celebrated the Mainz court of Frederick Barbarossa, Guiot listed eighty-six names of those men whom he considered to be 'courtly', and among these were featured the names of Henry the Liberal (l.324) and Philip of Alsace (l.329).

Another way in which this new connection between knighthood and learning becomes visible is in the fear that learning should fall into the wrong hands. Walter Map spoke to the justiciar Ranulf de Glanville of the horror of serfs wanting to educate their degenerate children:

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[139] Philip of Harvengt, 'Epistolae', letter 17, PL 203, 152-3.
[140] *Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. Millor and Brooke, II, letter 209, pp.314-39.
[141] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb, I, IV.6.

scilicet quod generosi parcium nostrarum aut dedignantur aut pigri sunt applicare litteris liberos suos, cum solis liberis de iure liceat artes addiscere, nam et inde liberales dicuntur. Serui uero, quos uocamos rusticos, suos ignominiosos et degeneres in artibus eis indebitis enutrire contendunt, non ut exeant a uiciis se ut habundent diuiciis ... Artes enim gladii sunt potentum, qui pro modis utencium uariantur'.

The gentry of our land are too proud or too lazy to put their children to learning, whereas of right only free men are allowed to learn the arts, which for that very reason are called 'liberal'. The villeins on the other hand (or rustics, as we call them) vie with each other in bringing up their ignoble and degenerate offspring to those arts which are forbidden to them; not so that they may shed vices, but that they may gather riches... The arts are as the swords of mighty men: their force varies with the method of him who holds them'.[142]

Knowledge is thus linked to status as well as military achievement.

These opinions appear to have been shared by contemporary figures of power. As well as demonstrating their own learnedness, the educated leaders of the courts of Champagne and Flanders also had a particularly important role in the promotion of literature. Philip of Flanders took an active part in the production of literature at the court of Flanders.[143] He sponsored Gautier d'Arras, provost of Arras, and Chrétien de Troyes wrote the *Conte du Graal* for the count. Henry of Champagne, who was often praised for his donations to the secular clergy,[144] patronised many of those who wrote literary works within the court of Champagne;[145] Putter suggests that Henry's sponsorship of secular

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[142] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.10, pp.12-13.
[143] Stanger, 'Literary Patronage', pp.214-6.
[144] 'Le nombre total des canonicats fondés par Henri [...] cent quatre-vingt-seize au moins': H.d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne* (Paris, 1869), III, pp.178-80.
[145] The patronage of the *Conte du Graal* by Philip of Flanders is discussed in Chapter Three.

canons may have led to the revival of literature at the court.[146] Although, as Stanger states, Philip's own patronage of literature was not necessarily sparked by personal interest, it is perhaps significant that it coincided with the time of his greatest political power.[147] This, together with Map's indignant statement that knowledge should be restricted to the noble classes, supports the idea of knowledge as a powerful ideal and political tool at the courts of northern France.

An association with learning was significant enough to be used to enhance the positive image a writer wanted to create of his subject. In his Latin account of the family of Guines, written between 1194-8 at the command of the son of Count Baldwin II of Guines (d.1206), and which echoes cultural movements of the time,[148] Lambert of Ardres set out to define his subjects as keen learners. In one chapter, the virtues of Count Baldwin and his library were described.[149] Baldwin was the father of Arnold, who was a frequent attendee of tournaments and trained in chivalry at the court of Count Philip of Flanders.[150] Although the count could not read 'licet omnino laicus esset et illiteratus', he was interested in philosophy and literature, and encouraged the gathering of theologians and scholars at his court.[151] So even if a biographer was purposely inflating a count's reputation as a figure of literature and learning, to show him

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[146] Putter, 'Knights and Clerics', pp.243-66.
[147] Stanger, 'Literary Patronage', pp.214-6.
[148] Duby, 'The Culture', pp.261-2.
[149] Lambert of Ardres informs us that Baldwin had a wealth of books and songs: 'Historia', c.81, p.598.
[150] See Chapter Two.
[151] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.80, p.598.

as learned was clearly desirable. In the knightly leaders of the courts we thus find chivalric deeds and literary and cultural tastes integrated.

So the level of education experienced by knights varied. Not all knights - even those with reputations for learning - could actually read. Walter Map describes a boy who was 'insatiably curious' about the honourable arts:

> cum non esset literatus (quod doleo), quamlibet literarum seriem transcribere sciret.
>
> although he was no scholar (which I regret) he could copy any set of letters.[152]

This man was educated but not a 'litteratus'.[153] Before he was twenty, he left England and went to the court of Philip of Flanders, 'to learn of him (if worthy) the art of chivalry, and chose him out for his lord: a wise choice' in the eyes of Map ('quatinus armis instrui mereretur ab ipso, ipsumeque / preelegit dominum; nec iniuste').[154] Gerald of Wales tells of a *miles litteratus* who appeared in a vision to his learned master Maurice, the brother of abbot Clement of Neath, and played a language game with him:

> Miles enim ille litteratus fuerat et, dum vixit, solebat saepius alternis versibus, et nunc incipiendo nunc finiendo, sociali quadam recreatione tanquam colludendo conferre.
>
> For the soldier was a very learned man, and whilst he was alive he was very frequently accustomed, by way of amusement and social recreation, to converse with him in alternate verses, sometimes beginning and at other times finishing them.[155]

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[152] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, iv.1.
[153] William Marshal similarly appreciated the value of literary skills, but did not necessarily possess them himself: D.Crouch, *William Marshal: Court, Career and Chivalry in the Angevin Empire 1147-1219* (London, 1990), p.23.
[154] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, iv.1.
[155] Gerald of Wales, 'De Principis Instructione', iii.28, p.310; Stevenson (trans.), *On the Instruction*, p.104.

Some of the knights of Chrétien de Troyes's chivalric romances are able to read: for example Gawain reads in *Le Conte du Graal*; and Lancelot reads inscriptions on a set of tombstones in the *Chevalier de la Charrete*.[156] Knights were primarily trained for a secular life, which was not book-centred, and Latin was more a useful tool than a necessity.[157] But it was possible to learn by proxy, and learnedness was a virtue of knights.

So learning appears to exist in degrees: reading and writing are not necessarily the same, and it was not essential for a knight to be well-versed in Latin. Yet the romance texts appear to represent accurately the standard of court education enjoyed by the higher nobility, and it is clear that such an education was respected and seen to be admirable in these models of fine nobles. So Cligés represents the ultimate combination of knightly prowess and social graces:

> Ce fu Cligés, qui an lui ot
> San et biauté, largesce et force.
> Si ot le fust a tot l'escorce,
> Si sot plus d'escremie et d'arc
> Que Tristanz li niés le roi Marc,
> Et plus d'oisiax, et plus de chiens:
> En Cligés ne failli nus biens. (ll.2746-52)

> This was Cligés, who combined good sense and beauty, generosity and strength. He had the heartwood along with the bark: he knew more about fencing and archery than did King

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[156] *Conte du Graal*, ll.465-6; *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, ll.1860-6. In *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien de Troyes expresses the responsibility of learned men to use their knowledge, ll.1-18. For an account of the direct influence of the prose *Lancelot* on vernacular handbooks of chivalry, see E.Kennedy, 'The Knight as Reader of Arthurian Romance', *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend*, ed. M.B.Schichtman and J.P.Carley (New York, 1994), pp.70-90. See also Bloch, *Feudal Society*, II, esp. pp.307-8.

[157] Language barriers and accents are often ignored in chivalric romances: W.MacBain, 'The Outsider at Court, or What is So Strange About the Stranger?', *The Court and Cultural Diversity: Selected Papers from the Eighth Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, ed. E.Mullally and J.Thompson (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 357-65.

> Mark's nephew Tristan, and more about birds and more about hounds. In Cligés there was nothing lacking.[158]

Evidence from the historical courts of northern France thus suggests that the sociable and learned chivalric court described in romances was something to which some knights and leaders aspired, and in whose terms they described themselves.

Having studied the ideology of the chivalric court, and established that chivalric literature supported the growth of chivalric ideals at court, I wish to consider in more detail its circulation at court. A lack of full training in the arts did not mean that knights did not understand texts. Chivalric romances were written in the vernacular; this may support the idea that the chivalric romances were more relevant and more appealing to knights at court than other texts. Texts and the liberal arts are mentioned frequently in chivalric romances, and knights are the audiences of action as well as participants. *Le Chevalier au Lion* describes a man and a woman listening to their daughter reading a romance (ll.5356-63); and at his coronation at court Erec is dressed in an elaborately and carefully crafted robe depicting the liberal arts of geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy, woven in golden thread.[159] Chrétien de Troyes claims that he was assisted in its description by the work of Macrobius; and Henry the Liberal had a copy of Macrobius's *Dream of Scipio* in his library. An awareness of works of literature and other cultural artefacts thus pervades the texts.[160] The

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[158] Kibler, p.156,
[159] *Erec et Enide*, ll.6679-747; Kibler, p.120.
[160] M.A.Freeman, *The Poetics of* Translatio Studii *and* Conjointure*: Chrétien de Troyes's* Cligés, French Forum Monographs, 12 (Lexington, 1979), pp.142-3.

author of *Floire et Blancheflor* tells how he came upon his story when it was being related by a damsel to her sister. The damsel stated that the story was two hundred years old. She had heard the story from a clerk, who had in turn come across it in a book:

> L'aisnee d'une amor parloit
> a sa seror, que molt amoit,
> qui fu ja entre II enfans,
> bien avoit passé II cens ans,
> mais uns obins clers li avoit dit,
> qui l'avoit leü en escrit. (ll.49-54)

The authority of the text as a written work is emphasised, as is its public performance.

Indeed the recital of court literature was a 'social event' in chivalric romances as it was in life.[161] Peter of Blois referred to the emotional impact on listeners who became involved with the fates of Arthur's knights:

> sicut de Arturo... fabulosa quaedam referunt histriones, quorum auditu concutiuntur ad compassionem audientium corda, et usque ad lacrymas compunguntur.
>
> the minstrels tell many a marvellous thing of Arthur whereby the hearts of the listeners, when they hear them, are shaken with pity and moved to tears'.[162]

The number of continuations of chivalric works such as Chrétien's romances, and their translation into many different languages in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, also proves their popularity and their sphere of readership.[163]

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[161] Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, p.518. Knightly heroes recount their adventures to their fellows within this court environment: see for example *L'Atre Périlleux*, ed. Woledge, ll.6570-6584.
[162] Peter of Blois, 'Liber de confessione sacramentali', PL 207, 1077-92 (1088).
[163] The romance *Le Chevalier à l'Épée*, which was written in the Champagne area around the turn of the twelfth century (and which some believe to be the work of Chrétien de Troyes), refers to Chrétien's achievements thus: 'L'en ne doit Crestïen de Troies,/ Ce m'est vis, par raison, blasmer,/ Qui sot dou roi Artu conter,/ De sa cort et de sa mesniee,/ Qui tant fu loee et prisiee'

Moreover, the courtly environment encouraged reflective approaches to stories. Techniques of literary criticism were taught at the monastic and urban schools. Allegorical interpretations of texts were popular, and Chrétien himself expresses an explicit sense of care in preparing his writings. In *Le Chevalier au Lion* Calogrenant states the responsibility on the part of the reader to extract the true meaning from a text:

> Cuers et oroilles m'aportez,
> car parole est tote perdue
> s'ele n'est de cuer entandue.
> De cez i a qui la chose oent
> qu'il n'entandent, et si la loent;
> et cil n'en ont ne mes l'oïe,
> des que li cuers n'i entant mie. (ll.150-6)

> Lend me your hearts and ears, for words that are not understood by the heart are lost completely. There are those who hear something without understanding it, yet praise it; they have only the faculty of hearing, since the heart does not comprehend it.[164]

The audience is thus encouraged to probe the meaning of the text, and to be aware of the possibility of misinterpretation. In the same way the authors set up their texts to be more than stories. The teaching of critical reading and creative imagination encouraged clerics in this self-aware process.[165]

During the cultural explosion known today as the 'twelfth-century renaissance', the counts of Champagne and Flanders actively encouraged the

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(ll.18-22); ('One may not reasonably reproach Chrétien de Troyes, in my opinion, who could tell stories of King Arthur and his court and retinue, which was praised and honoured so much'): R.C.Johnston and D.D.R.Owen (eds.), *Two Old French Gauvain Romances* (Edinburgh, 1972); Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.87.

[164] Kibler, p.297.

[165] For a detailed discussion of Chrétien de Troyes's self-aware demonstration of *translatio studii* in *Cligés*, see Freeman, *The Poetics*. On the medieval reception of his texts and their application to society, see Carasso-Bulow, *The Merveilleux*, pp.23-8.

production of texts, including those chivalric romances which describe the court as a centre of chivalric living, and their courts attracted many writers and educated men. The catalogues of libraries of lay institutions in the twelfth century show that there was a growth in the number of libraries in the twelfth century, and in the scope of their collections. There was an interest in Latin classics, and the libraries of northern France had a particularly large amount of works on dialectic.[166] Donations were one major means for the accumulation of volumes: John of Salisbury gave his library collection to Chartres cathedral in 1180, and the works included a copy of the Bible, works by Augustine, Jerome, Seneca and Cicero, and his own *Policraticus.* A copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* existed in Count Henry's library, along with classics and Latin histories. Another copy of the *Historia* was available at Pontigny, the place of exile of Thomas Becket.[167] Most houses contained copies of fundamental works such as the Bible, and many writings of Augustine and other church fathers. The works of Peter Damiani appeared at Tournai in the twelfth century; also popular were Peter Lombard's *sententiae*, and Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica.*

It is worth considering the library of Saint-Étienne at Troyes in particular, which housed Henry the Liberal's collection. Henry's library is evidence of an epoch of brilliance, in view of the books ordered between 1140-

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[166] J.S.Beddie, 'Libraries in the Twelfth Century: Their Catalogues and Contents', *Haskins Anniversary Essays in Medieval History*, ed. C.H.Taylor (Boston, 1929), pp.1-23.
[167] J.C.Crick, *The* Historia Regum Britannie *of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, IV: *Dissemination and Reception* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.212-3.

1230, including classical works of antiquity and new works, such as romances and the 'matter of Britain'. A manuscript of Valerius Maximus was written by Guillaume l'Anglais in 1167 at the command of the Count of Champagne.[168] A copy of this appeared in Henry's library in the same year that John of Salisbury had cited it in his letter to Henry, thus suggesting that Henry placed genuine importance on textual debate.[169]

Henry the Liberal and Thomas Becket were advised in their choice of manuscripts: evidence suggests that the figures of Herbert of Bosham (c.1115-c.1194), John of Salisbury and Nicholas of Clairvaux (d.1178) were responsible for the selection of books which were accumulated at the courts. Henry had his collection looked after by the clerks and canons of the *collégiale.* Some were given the principle task of looking after the books, including Nicholas of Clairvaux, who apparently lent books on the condition that they were returned along with a good copy, thus preserving and expanding the contents of the library.[170] Nicholas also wrote of Henry's achievements in the liberal arts.[171] Twelfth-century Champagne saw a flourishing of collections of classical authors - 'florilège'- and Nicholas, chaplain of the bishop of Troyes, secretary of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), and Henry's good companion, appears to

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[168] P.Stirnemann, 'Une bibliothèque princière au XIIe siècle', *Splendeurs de la Cour de Champagne*, pp.36-42 (37).
[169] *Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. Millor and Brooke, II, letter 209, pp.316-9.
[170] J.R.Strayer (ed.), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols. (NewYork, 1982-9), 7, 565a.
[171] Nicholas of Clairvaux, 'Epistolae', letter 56, PL 196, 1652. Nicholas of Clairvaux is discussed further in Chapter Three.

have written one, which he addressed to a pope, possibly pope Adrian IV.[172] Nicholas praises the work for its elegance and wisdom. Another florilège (MS Latin 7647) from the Sens/Auxerre region (c.1165-75) is attributed to John of Salisbury.

These works were consultable in the libraries: Chrétien de Troyes may have used the copy of Geoffrey's *Historia* in Henry the Liberal's collection. Thus we can see that the texts available at the twelfth-century courts had a direct influence on the cultural education of knights both through teaching and through leisure, and that an appreciation of literature was seen to be a virtue in its own right, and increased the chivalrous reputation of a knight.

Conclusions

The analysis of the court has demonstrated that the court had a prominent place in the twelfth-century imagination, and that knightly activities and ideologies of chivalry thrived at the courts of twelfth-century northern France. Ceremonial occasions offered the chance to demonstrate key chivalric qualities, and to assert thereby social and political status. Participation in court events was highly prized, and chivalric attributes such as *largesse* were made visible and introduced a degree of competition into events. Guests and leaders wished to associate themselves with court gatherings and the values which were embraced there, and tension and rivalry were a part of life at court.

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[172] MS 1895, which has been linked with Troyes: P.Stirnemann and D.Poirel, 'Deux partisans de la renaissance en Champagne au XIIe siècle: Nicolas de Montiéramey et Jean de Salisbury' (forthcoming).

Indeed the twelfth-century court was an environment of tension rather than cohesion, at which different ideologies of behaviour and belief systems circulated. Courtiers were under pressure to satisfy the expectations which accompanied social positions, yet suffered the censure of critics, which to some extent was itself fuelled by rivalry. Yet the criticism levelled at the practices of knights was answered by supporters of this way of life. The chivalric romances of Chrétien de Troyes encouraged their audiences to emulate the image of the civilised warriors of the court found within them, and the evidence suggests that knights engaged with these literary representations.

The court environment played a key part in the transmission of ideologies of chivalry, providing a cultural 'nucleus' at which social groups could gather and chivalric ideals could be promoted. The ideology of the restrained knight developed as a result of the mixing of clerical and chivalric ideals at court, and the ethos of the learned knight expressed in chivalric romances had both ideological and political value. Education was a part of this process, and knights are seen to have had access to texts which promote chivalric values, and are praised for emulating them. The romance ethos of the chivalric court, which celebrates luxury and courtesy, thus appears to have been demonstrated at real courts.

In Chrétien's romances, which were valued at court as a literary form, chivalry really is 'the highest order' given by God (*Conte du Graal*, ll.1632-8), and the court defines, and is defined by, the chivalry of its knights. The study of leading figures such as Henry the Liberal and Philip of Flanders confirms that

courtesy and learning were valued at the historical courts. Chrétien's romances thus describe chivalric ideologies which were adopted by court leaders and by knights and clerics. The cultural growth of the courts of Champagne and Flanders and the importance of the knightly classes was reflected in, and fed by, the growing body of vernacular literature which celebrated knights. Through accounts of the court, ideals of chivalry are confirmed as representative of a noble and admirable way of life.

Chapter Two: The Tournament

In the twelfth century northern France witnessed the birth of another important knightly institution: the tournament.[1] Although references to forms of war-game do exist in accounts from the eleventh century and earlier,[2] it was in the twelfth century that the 'torneamentum' emerged, appearing as a neologism in the sources.[3] The tournament was distinguishable from other forms of mounted combat, such as the joust (or 'behourd'), by a number of features. As opposed to jousts, which were fought in confined lists, tournaments involved combat on a large scale, between two teams of men and in a large open area, which was often between two towns. As they grew in popularity, tournaments attracted knights from abroad, and also spread from France to other countries,

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[1] Bloch describes the tournament as 'a distinctive class amusement, which the nobility found more exciting than any other': *Feudal Society*, II, p.304; 'les tournois occupèrent, en France, une place considérable dans la vie des hommes appartenent à la classe noble, que tout document qui nous apprend quelles en étaient les règles, ou du moins les usages, quelle influence ils avaient sur les moeurs, sur les conditions sociales, mérite d'étre considéré comme historique au premier chef': *Histoire*, ed. Meyer, III, pp.xxxv-xliv (xxxv). Other studies include: R.Barber and J.Barker, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1989); L.D.Benson, 'The Tournament in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes and *L'Histoire de Guillaume Le Maréchal*', in L.D.Benson and J.Leyerle (eds.), *Chivalric Literature: Essays on Relations between Literature and Life in the Later Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1980), pp.1-24; R.H.Cline, 'The Influence of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 20 (1945), pp.204-11; R.H.Cline, *Tournaments of English and French Literature Compared with Those of History, 1100-1500*, unpublished diss. (Chicago, 1939); R.Harvey, *Moriz von Craûn and the Chivalric World* (Oxford, 1961), pp.112-217; G.Duby, *The Legend of Bouvines: War, Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. C.Tihanyi (Berkeley, 1990), pp.84-97; N.Denholm-Young, 'The Tournament in the Thirteenth Century', *Studies in Medieval History Presented to F.M.Powicke*, ed. R.W.Hunt, W.A.Pontin, and R.W.Southern (Oxford, 1948), pp.240-68; and the collection of essays discussing the economic, social, and philological aspects of tournaments, in J.Fleckenstein (ed.), *Das ritterliche Turnier im Mittelalter* (Göttingen, 1985): W.Rösener, 'Ritterliche Wirtschaftsverhältnisse und Turnier im sozialen Wandel des Hochmittelalters', pp.296-338; M.Parisse, 'Le tournoi en France, des origines à la fin du XIII^{e} siècle', pp.175-211; U.Mölk, 'Philogische Aspekte des Turniers', pp.163-74.

[2] On the tournament in its capacity as a continuation of classical models of military exercise, see Parisse, 'Le tournoi', pp.180-2.

[3] Parisse, 'Le tournoi', pp.182-5; Keen, *Chivalry*, p.83.

making the tournament an international sport. Tournaments fulfilled an important military role, providing vital training for war.[4] They were also key social gatherings, and in twelfth-century romance participation in tournaments became part of the paradigm of a chivalrous knight. The tournament thus provides a useful case-study of a chivalric institution which emerged in the twelfth century, and its effect on society.

This chapter considers the tournament in terms of what it signified as an expression of the values of chivalry, its place in contemporary debates about violence and the perceived role of knights, and whether it provided a way of asserting knightly status and identity. It does so by setting accounts which opposed the tournament against texts in which tournaments were celebrated, and examining the social and political agendas of the individuals and social groups behind these texts. In the process, it puts to the test certain scholarly orthodoxies about tournaments, including the idea that romances are not a useful gauge of the knightly experience of tournaments. Examining the tournament as an opportunity for the public expression of chivalric values also enables us to consider how the tournament increased the solidarity of knights as a specifically chivalric occupation, developing the assertions that tournaments played an

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[4] French knights developed a reputation for superior fighting, as will be seen below. According to William of Newburgh, recognition of this fact induced Richard I to permit tournaments in England in 1194. Note, however, the introduction of fees for all participants at this point, which may also have been a significant contributing factor. No knight was to come to the tournament unless bringing the appropriate amount of money (4 marks of silver for a landed knight, 2 for a landless knight): Denholm-Young, 'The Tournament', pp.244-5, n.5. Gillingham points out that the couched lance, often cited by scholars as a reason for the development of the tournament, was not in fact as instrumental in their rise as developments in body armour: Gillingham, 'Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Britain and Ireland', *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp.41-58 (50).

important part in the standardisation of chivalry, and the further development of chivalric institutions.[5] In examining the political and economic role of tournaments, the chapter also seeks to challenge assumptions about the knights who made their fortunes at tournaments, including certain rather romanticised portrayals of William Marshal.[6]

At tournaments the high ideals of chivalry met the violence and dangers of warfare: ideology and reality converged. The idea of the tournament stirred up contention among different social groups, not least because it was perceived by many as a violent and wasteful activity. Yet tournaments flourished in northern France under the patronage of rich noble leaders, who included Count Philip of Flanders, Henry the Liberal of Champagne, Count Thibaut of Blois, and Count Baldwin of Hainault. Count Charles of Flanders's participation in tournaments was also heralded by Galbert of Bruges:

> sed certamina militiae secularis pro honore terrae suae et pro exercitio militum suorum apud aliquem comitum vel principum Normanniae vel Franciae, aliquando vero ultra regnum Franciae, arripuit, illicque cum ducentis equitibus tornationes exercuit. Qua in re famam suam et comitatus sui potentiam ac gloriam sublimavit.
>
> So he undertook chivalric exploits for the honour of his land and the training of his knights in the lands of the counts or princes of Normandy or France, sometimes even beyond the kingdom of France; and there with two hundred knights on horseback he

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[5] Keen, *Chivalry*, p.83; M.Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217* (Cambridge, 1996), p.149.

[6] These include Duby, 'Youth in Aristocratic Society', *The Chivalrous Society*, pp.112-22; G.Duby: *Guillaume le Maréchal ou le meilleur chevalier du monde* (Paris, 1984); and the 1933 work of Painter, *William Marshal: Knight-Errant, Baron, and Regent of England* (Toronto, 1982).

> engaged in tourneys, in this way enhancing his own fame and the power and glory of his county'.[7]

Yet the enthusiasm of these men for tournaments was not shared by all, and while they encouraged its growth, other members of society, including kings and men of the Church, worked to prohibit it altogether, as we will see. Many different views about tournaments are represented in the sources, where some accounts are as condemnatory as others are ardent in their approbation. This chapter compares representations of tournaments in chivalric romances, sermons, and chronicles, exploring what they signified to different individuals and social groups, who had their own agendas, and comparing these with the status and role of tournaments according to the knights who participated in them. Rather than merely presenting these as opposing sides, it builds on and extends previous research by putting these discourses in dialogue with each other.

The idea that chivalric romances may provide valuable information about historical tournaments has traditionally been met with reluctance on the part of some historians.[8] Yet the influence of the twelfth-century romance on historical tournaments of the thirteenth century has been proven, and the adoption of the names of Arthurian characters in later tournaments, and of many of the motifs found in romances, point to the influence of these texts and suggest

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[7] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro, traditione et occisione gloriosi Karoli Comitis Flandriarum*, ed. J.Rider (Turnhout, 1994), c.4; J.B.Ross (trans.), *The Murder of Charles the Good* (Toronto, 1982), p.92.

[8] For example, Barber and Barker state that they will use the romances as evidence only when absolutely 'necessary': *Tournaments,* p.11; see also Parisse, 'La tournoi', pp.186, 202.

that this was evident as early as the twelfth century.[9] So, with an activity as momentous and as popular as this, one which was notably patronised by the same men who patronised chivalric literature, is there evidence for closer links between twelfth-century tournaments and their twelfth-century literary representations? Some scholars have assigned a moral purpose to the tournaments of chivalric romances, suggesting that their more controlled nature had a civilising role, thus allying them with the attempts made to reduce the excessive violence of the knighthood and to redirect attention to the morally worthier crusades.[10] This idea will be tested in an examination of the nature of tournaments in chivalric romances, and comparison with other portrayals of the tournament.

The chapter begins (2.i) by considering the problems of the tournament, in order that we may assess criticisms of the tournament in terms of the agendas of their writers. First to be studied are sermons, some of which were written specifically for knights and would have been delivered to them. It will be seen that some of the key issues which aroused debate were expenditure, the quest for glory, the capture of booty, and the notion of fair play. Secular opposition to the activity is then discussed in the light of these objections. More lenient views are then considered, as a way in to ascertaining areas of correspondence or disparity in contemporary perceptions of tournaments.

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[9] R.S.Loomis, 'Arthurian Influence on Sport and Spectacle', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. R.S.Loomis (Oxford, 1959), pp.553-9; R.H.Cline, 'The Influence of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 20 (1945), pp.204-11.
[10] Cline, 'The Tournament', p.206.

In the second section (2.ii) complaints about the tournament are set against the more celebratory attitude to tournaments to be found in chivalric romances and chronicles. Key participants will be considered, including Philip of Flanders, and William Marshal (c.1147-1219), whose biography, *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, was written at the command of the Marshal's eldest son, and completed in 1226-9.[11] This text is a useful source because it was a product of the same cultural milieu, and tournaments cut across regional boundaries in their appeal. It is a celebratory chivalric work which tells of the rise in position of a young landless man, someone who made his reputation - and his fortune - as a successful tourneyer, and became the tutor in chivalry of Henry the Young King. The relative impact of these different representations of the tournament is considered in the final analysis. In the face of such strong condemnation and high ideals, which of the various texts encouraged identification on the part of knights, and did the image of the tournament that they promoted triumph?

2.i Accursed Tournaments: Vice and Vainglory

Jacques de Vitry's diatribe against tournaments encapsulates many of the issues that we need to consider. Jacques (c.1180-1240) attended the University of Paris in the early thirteenth century, and was acquainted with the works of Peter the Chanter. He had a prominent role in the crusades, and was appointed to

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[11] *Histoire*, ed. Meyer.

the bishopric of Acre in 1216.[12] In a sermon aimed at 'potentes et milites' in the style of the estate-oriented exempla (*sermones ad status*), a text which can be reasonably applied to the conditions of the twelfth century, Jacques set out to demonstrate how, by frequenting tournaments, knights were unwittingly committing sins:

> Memini quod quadam die loquebar cum quadam milite, qui valdo libenter torneamenta frequentabat et alios invitabat, precones mittens et hystriones qui tornamenta proclamarent, nec credebat ut asserebat hujusmodi ludum vel exercitium esse peccatum.
>
> I remember that one day I was speaking with a knight who often went to tournaments and who invited other knights by sending heralds and histrions to announce that a tournament was being held, and he did not believe, or so he assured me, that this sort of game or exercise was a sin.[13]

Pride and Envy are the first of these sins, which manifest themselves, according to Jacques, in the fierce striving for glory and the ultimate reputation at tournaments:

> Non enim carent superbia cum, propter laudem hominum et gloriam inanem, in circuitu illo impii ambulant et vani non carent invidia, cum unus alii invideat, eo quod magis strenuus in armis reputetur et majorem laudem assignatur.
>
> Knights do not lack for pride, since for the praise of men and vainglory the impious and vain make the rounds. They do not lack for envy, for each man envies the other for being judged a stronger contestant and for drawing greater praise.

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[12] Jacques de Vitry, 'Exempla', *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry,* ed.T.F.Crane (London, 1890), CXLI, pp.62-4; J.LeGoff, 'Social Realities and Ideological Codes in the Early Thirteenth Century: An Exemplum by Jacques de Vitry', in *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. A.Goldhammer (Chicago, 1988), pp.181-90; Baldwin, *Masters,* I, pp.38-9.
[13] Jacques de Vitry, 'Exempla', ed. Crane, pp.62-3; LeGoff, *Medieval Imagination*, p.188.

Ill-will and wrath ('odio et ira') drive the knights to strike each other mercilessly, risking death; and so gloominess ('tristicia') overshadows the event. Jacques also complains that avarice corrupts the greedy tourneyers, who are preoccupied with capturing prisoners and booty, including horses. As a result of their uncontrolled lust for robbing material goods, great injury is done to the farmers, whose lands are often badly damaged. Gluttony then attends their extravagant banquets with all their 'worldly pomp' ('mundi pompam'), paid for by the acquisition of the wealth of others; and the final sinful indulgence is the lust for salacious women ('mulieribus impudicis'), for whom these knights perform.[14] Vainglory, greed, and the craving for personal gain were thus what spurred knights to indulge in the violence and vanity of tournaments, according to Jacques de Vitry. Apparently when Jacques had explained the sinfulness of tournaments, the knight to whom he was speaking rejected tournaments utterly.

These complaints were not unfounded, and some of the issues raised, such as the destruction of the farmlands and the violence of the contest, were voiced by others. The *Histoire* shows that acres of vine crops were destroyed in a tournament at Lagni-sur-Marne (ll.4820-970), and such damage inevitably resulted in substantial losses to the local people. The twelfth-century tournament was a dangerous event, one which only in later centuries became an arena for more civilised spectacular display and restrained one-to-one lancing in the lists, the image which is often evoked in popular portrayals of chivalry today. Fighting occurred between two major towns, and occurred *en masse*, and the weapons,

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[14] Jacques de Vitry, 'Exempla', ed. Crane, p.63.

armour and techniques used were at this stage little different from those of real warfare.[15] Death at tournaments, although often accidental (and best avoided because of the value of the ransom), was not uncommon, as will be seen.

Jacques was not alone in his concern for the souls of the dead lost through this violent event. Objections to tournaments gave rise to 'anti-tournament' literature which contained tales about the ghosts of tourneying knights who were buried without ecclesiastical sanction,[16] and were clearly designed to instil fear in knights. Walter Map, writing in the twelfth century, described a tournament in the following terms:

> Apud Louanum in marchia Lotharigarum et Flandrie, in loco qui Lata Quercus dicitur, aduenerant ut adhuc solent multa militum milia ut more suo armati colluderent, quem ludum torniamentum uocant, qui reccius tormentum dicitur. (ii.16)
>
> At Louvain in the march of Lorraine and Flanders, at the place called Lata Quercus, there were assembled (as is still the custom) many thousands of knights to play together in arms after their manner, a sport which they call a tournament, but the better name would be torment.[17]

He went on to tell a cautionary tale about a knight who prevailed at a tournament and became a hero, a scenario akin to what we will find to be a theme of many chivalric romances, again suggesting a familiarity with the romances on the part of Walter. Yet at the very end of the day this knight is fatally wounded and dies. Nobody is able to discover his true identity, and thus his participation in the

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[15] Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, p.151.
[16] One incident at Neuss in 1241, at which many knights suffocated in the dust, and died from their wounds, was 'siezed' by didactic writers and used in such a fashion: Harvey, *Moriz*, pp.118-19. Such conditions were *a fortiori* present in the twelfth century.
[17] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.164-5.

sport and his moment of secular glory are rendered futile. Again, the intention is to counteract the secular sense of the glory of tournaments, and dampen its heroic spirit.

In fact, strong objections to the sport manifested themselves in an official Church ban on tournaments, which was first declared by Pope Innocent II at the 1130 Council of Clermont.[18] It carried the threat of excommunication, and prevented the ecclesiastical burial of any knight killed at a tournament. The original ban was reiterated in 1139, 1148, and again in 1179. The evidence communicates a varying amount of success on the part of these pronouncements. Some evidence shows that they were upheld. For example, in 1163 Pope Alexander III (1159-81) refused to grant the request of the archbishop of Rheims to bury a knight killed at a tournament;[19] and in 1149, St Bernard of Clairvaux wrote to Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis (b.1080-1151), asking him to prevent the tournament planned between Henry of Champagne and Robert of Dreux, brother to the king. St Bernard was aware of the political as well as the moral dangers which threatened in this particular case. In his letter Bernard referred to the event as a 'diabolica figmenta', and appealed to Abbot Suger to reassert the authority of the Church: 'Vim autem appello, quod ad ecclesiasticam pertinet

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[18] C.J.Hefele and D.H.Leclercq (ed.), *Histoire des Conciles d'après les documents originaux*, V.I (Paris, 1912), 688.

[19] 'Verum, licet in omnibus, quantumcumque cum Deo possumus, tam tibi quam ei velimus deferre, et petitiones vestras libentius exaudire; quia tamen a regibus, principibus et baronibus terrae propter eamdem causam saepius affectuose rogati, nullum hujusmodi precibus assensum praebuimus, ne prava illa consuetudo ex hoc incrementum posset suscipere, non grave tibi sit vel molestum, quod preces tuas in hoc praetermisimus inexauditas.': Alexander III, 'Epistolae', letter 98, RHGF 15 (Paris, 1878), 744-977 (804).

disciplinam'.[20] Yet the event must have taken place nevertheless, for in the same year Henry wrote a letter to Abbot Suger, asking for his help in freeing Anseric of Montréal, who had been captured at the tournament.[21]

Monarchs also attempted to stop tournaments. They expressed similar concerns about their violence and expense, and the threat to public order which they posed. Geoffrey, duke of Brittany (b.1158), son of Henry II, was killed at a tournament in 1186, and tournaments were banned in Henry's kingdom; and Philip Augustus forbade his sons to take part in tournaments during his absence on crusade.[22] A parallel may be noted here between the *Histoire* and the *Conte du Graal*, both of which describe tournaments which were interrupted for political reasons. William Marshal, tourneyer extraordinaire, found it necessary to intervene in this way on two occasions in the latter part of his career.[23] In Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du Graal* a tournament arranged between Meliant of Liz and Tibaut of Tintagel is cancelled by Tibaut, following the advice of his concerned counsellors (ll.4891-900). However, the people are unhappy about the cancellation, and on the arrival of the cavalry, in the form of Perceval and his companions, the event proceeds. These examples demonstrate the political undercurrents which could exist behind the sporting event, and at the same time they reinforce the sense of its secular popularity.

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[20] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera,* ed. J.Leclercq, C.H.Talbot, and H.M.Rochais, vol. 8 (Rome, 1978), pp. 339-40; trans. T.Evergates, *Feudal Society in Medieval France: Documents from the County of Champagne* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp.106-7.
[21] See Evergates, *Documents*, p.107.
[22] See Nain de Tillemont, *Vie de Saint Louis, Roi de France*, ed. J.de Gaulle, Société de l'histoire de France (Paris, 1847), I, p.12.
[23] Painter, *William Marshal*, p.246.

Sometimes tournaments did indeed generate conflict, causing an initially friendly event to turn violent, as in the following example of a tournament held between Gournay and Ressons in 1168, in which Baldwin, the son of the Count of Hainault, joined the smaller French army against the Flemish:

> tamen ipse Balduinus cum probis quos secum habebat militibus, ad partem Francorum qui ibi pauci erant, ob rancorem quem contra comitem Flandrie et suos habebat, transivit, comitique Flandrie et ejus magnis viribus viriliter restitit.

Philip of Flanders became angry at this act, and began an onslaught:

> Comes autem Flandrie, nimia accensus ira, cum suis hominibus tam equitibus quam peditibus quasi ob bellum ordinatis gravius Francis et Hanoneinsibus occurrere cepit.[24]

Even in an initially friendly tournament situation, the count of Flanders apparently expected certain allegiances: tournaments were politically charged as well as ferocious. The tournament could thus act as a convenient screen for airing existing political frustrations. While the tournament may have provided a way for knights to channel physical energy in times of peace, they could conversely pose a threat to central authorities.[25] As knights often fought in the same groups as in real war, the gathering together of bands of men in such situations bore with it a constant threat of rebellion.[26]

Yet the fact that tournaments continued to happen, including those which had been specifically banned, in spite of decisions made by higher authorities, hints at a particular solidarity among those nobles who participated in them.

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[24] Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p.97.
[25] Bloch, *Feudal Society*, II, pp. 304-5.
[26] For examples of baronial rebellion, see Denholm-Young, 'The Tournament', p.245.

While he could not participate in tournaments in England, Henry II's son, Henry the Young King, attended tournaments in north-western France.[27] The benefits of tournaments were not only recognised by the participants: these events had a number of positive points which were not missed by Humbert of Romans, a Dominican born at the turn of the twelfth century who became Master of the Order. In his model sermon on tournaments, which formed part of his treatise *On the Formation of Preachers*, he, like Jacques de Vitry, set out the various evils which accompanied the holding of a tournament, but he also picked out the positive aspects of the tournament. Humbert's comments about the tournament can be treated as applicable to the twelfth century, and it is worth considering his account in order that we may establish further how homogenous were opinions about tournaments.

Humbert of Romans did not condemn tournaments outright, but he asserted rather that there were some things which were wrong, but some which could be 'tolerated', and others which were 'positively good',[28] and he divided his discussion into three categories accordingly. The first category denotes those three characteristics of the tournament which he considered to be 'utterly wrong'. Firstly, the theme of extravagance was discussed, in the context of its causing ruin to noblemen and their families. The issue of expense was indeed a concern for some nobles: for example, Henry II objected to his son's *largesse* at

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[27] *Histoire*, ed. Meyer, ll.2443ff.
[28] Humbert of Romans, Sermon 85, trans. S.Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York, 1982), pp.336-9 (338).

tournaments.[29] Overspending at such events could lead to a loss of fortune, as was the case of Gegend von Lüttich, who spent it all on entertainments.[30]

Reputation was the second negative aspect of the tournament, according to Humbert: 'Then there are people', he said, 'whose primary aim in tournaments is nothing more serious than acquiring a vain reputation for themselves for prowess or courage or something'.[31] To Humbert, knightly reputation thus ranked as low as it did for Jacques de Vitry in his opposition of what he deemed to be 'vanity' and 'vainglory'. Yet Humbert's phrase 'prowess or courage or something' would seem to reflect a lack of understanding of the concept of knightly reputation which was, as we have seen, one of the most fundamental components of noble life and of the values of chivalry, and which contributed to the sense of membership of an entire social group.

The third and most important of the absolute evils distinguished by Humbert is the degrading of the tournament by malicious acts of violence and trickery, and indulgence in sinful pleasures of the body. Humbert talked of those who harm the opposition, act treacherously, and acquire things wrongly 'contrary to the rules of the game', and of those knights who fall victim to the sinfulness of 'bad women' who attend such events.[32] We have already seen Philip of Flanders's reaction to Baldwin's shifting of loyalties at a tournament.

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[29] Gislbert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p.110; Warren, *Henry II*, pp.582-3. Lambert of Ardres also provides us with an example of lavish spending at tournaments: 'Historia', p.640. For the drain on resources, see Rösener, 'Ritterliche Wirtschaftsverhältnisse', pp.311-12.
[30] Rösener, 'Ritterliche Wirtschatsverhältnisse', p.312-13.
[31] Humbert of Romans, Sermon 85, trans.Tugwell, p.337.
[32] Humbert of Romans, Sermon 85, trans. Tugwell, p.337.

Yet the idea of wrongfully acquiring gains at tournaments is interesting, as it reveals a very different set of values from that which is often found in accounts of real tournaments. For example, the exploits of William Marshal and Philip of Flanders were often far from 'honourable'.[33] William certainly had no trouble in recognising the economic opportunities provided by tournaments, as we will see, and Philip of Flanders' famous tactic of waiting until the other side were exhausted and then launching his attack is not frowned upon, and was in fact a technique which William admired and adopted (*Histoire*, ll.2723-9).

Humbert's view does not do justice, either, to the sense of appreciation of the cunning which accompanies these episodes. The wry smile of William Marshal when he carried a knight to ransom, only to discover that his captive had swung himself out of the saddle unnoticed, and that he was leading an empty horse (*Histoire*, ll.2773-874), is one example of the different agendas and sets of values which were brought to the tournament. However surrounded by money and other evil trades these events were, knights did not necessarily equate tournaments with dishonour.

Yet Humbert was not blind to other, more positive functions of the tournament. In the second section of his discussion he detailed reasons for which the tournament should be tolerated. For Humbert, the positive aspects of

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[33] It is necessary to exercise care when using texts considered to be part of a chivalric canon. J.Gillingham highlights the distorted representations of previous scholars whose studies of the Marshal's chivalry in the *Histoire* are often moulded to fit preconceived notions. The traditional use of this text for information about tournaments often means that its references to war have been neglected, leaving the real focus and scope of the text to be misrepresented: 'War and Chivalry in the *History of William the Marshal*', *Richard Coeur de Lion: Kingship, Chivalry and War in the Twelfth Century* (London, 1994), pp.227-31.

tournaments lay in their power to incite selfless feelings and actions. He saw the potential of tournaments to excite in knights a moral zealousness comparable with 1 *Macc.*2:40,50, which condones fighting for the right cause, and which Humbert paralleled with 'going to fight the Saracens or something like that'.[34] Humbert suggested, in other words, that participating in tournaments could produce a sense of morality and solidarity which is of direct use to society and which is commendable. The Bible could be used to justify fighting: 'it is lawful to fight for justice. Struggle to the death for justice' (*Eccles.*4:33). Humbert highlights the tournament as a possible means of attaining such justice for the nation, in giving knights the skills required to participate in sanctioned warfare, namely the Crusades. Obedience and fighting for the sake of God were laudable to Humbert; and tournaments, he argued, play a part in this, in terms of making a knight 'better able to fight' in such situations.[35] Tournaments did give knights fighting practice which was relevant in situations of war, as well as practice in the capturing of prisoners; indeed there is some evidence to suggest that they served to develop conditions of ransom which were then played out in real war.[36] Accounts of the Battle at Bouvines, which took place on Sunday 27 July 1214, were also influenced by the ideology of the tournament.[37] On this day Philip Augustus fought and defeated the German army, under the banner of Otto,

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[34] Humbert of Romans, Sermon 85, trans. Tugwell, p.338.
[35] Humbert of Romans, Sermon 85, trans. Tugwell., p.338.
[36] Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, pp.151-2. Keen also argues that prizes given in war were influenced by the prizes awarded at tournaments: *Chivalry*, p.171.
[37] 'Effectively, Bouvines is spoken about as if it had been a tournament': Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, p.122.

near the bridge of Bouvines, which lay on the borders of the French and Flemish lands. Significantly, some of the noblemen who participated in tournaments in the *Histoire*, or their fathers, were later leaders at the battle, including the counts of Flanders and Clermont, and the duke of Burgundy.[38]

It is thus interesting to see that Humbert portrayed the tournament as a way of supporting the 'just war', highlighting its relevance and purpose, rather than as an act of frivolity and death which was fundamentally wasteful and pointless. The evidence considered so far suggests that representations of knights as the protectors and executors of justice tallied more with a knight's perception of his participation in tournaments than would the sense of an outright violation of his role. Doubts about the impact of such opinions are compounded by a comment which Humbert made at the beginning of his treatise, when he assessed the effectiveness of religious and didactic models. In his introductory comments, he made a remark about the function and audience of a sermon, and in doing so made clear the practical limitations by which sermons at tournaments were bound:

> Provided you can get sufficient hearing, a sermon can be extremely useful at tournaments, because a lot of people attend them who are very much in need of instruction. But if you cannot get a hearing, you should not preach, because of what it says in Eccles.32:6, "Where no one is listening, do not make a speech."[39]

The appeal and accessibility to knights of these representations is an important consideration. The anti-tournament texts studied here reveal an agenda on the

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[38] Duby, *Legend*, pp.89-90.
[39] Humbert of Romans, Sermon 85, trans. Tugwell, pp.336-7.

part of their authors, and also a substantial lack of identification with knightly concepts of fighting and chivalric identity.[40] This at once suggests why chivalric romances cannot be neglected in a study of tournaments. They provide, as we shall see, a different perspective, one that is more in line with the outlook of those who took part in tournaments. Accordingly I now aim to consider positive representations of the tournament, in all its extravagance, its appetite for booty, and its desire for glory, in order to explore further the social tensions which informed this debate, and to ask whether knights were able to use the tournament to define their own position in relation to other social groups.

2.ii Heroes of the Tournament: Reputation and Honour

> Mais en infer voil jou aler, car en infer vont li bel clerc, et li bel cevalier qui sont mort as tornois et as rices gueres. (ll.32-4)
>
> But in Hell will I go. For to Hell go the fair clerks and the fair knights who are slain in the tourney and the great wars. [41]

Such is the statement of the dispirited knight Aucassin, who laments his love for Nicolette, whom he has been forbidden from seeing. This passage in a romance written around the turn of the twelfth century might suggest that the discourse of tournament censure did to a greater or lesser degree infiltrate the medium of chivalric romances, and in this case the consciousness of one of its knights. Yet it is interesting that Aucassin makes a decision that he would rather join his fated friends in the underworld than go to Heaven, which is filled, he believes, by the

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[40] Harvey suggests that in the thirteenth century ghost stories about the fates of tourneying knights would have had little effect: *Moriz*, pp.118-9.

[41] M.Rocques (ed.), *Aucassin et Nicolette* (Paris, 1982); E.Mason (trans.), *Aucassin and Nicolette and other Medieval Romances and Legends* (London, 1910), p.6.

starving, the ill, and decrepit priests.[42] In fact the Heaven of the moralists does not seem an attractive place for this particular hero. The romance appears at once to acknowledge contemporary arguments against tournaments, but at the same time to suggest that knights can choose to ignore them, since it does not in any way criticise Aucassin's perspective. Prompted by this intriguing passage, this section seeks to ascertain more about the role of tournaments according to knights, by comparing accounts of tournaments in chronicles and chivalric romances.

The first point to note is the popularity of tournaments in the later twelfth century. The 1170s saw a notable rise in the recorded number of tournaments, and accounts of tournaments in chronicles bear witness to their popularity with the knights of Flanders and Champagne, and their widespread influence as social events. Gislebert of Mons discusses a tournament in August 1175 at which 200 knights and 1220 footsoldiers made up one team.[43] The *Histoire* tells of a tournament held at Pleurs in 1177 which attracted a great number of renowned men, including Philip of Flanders and Thibaut of Blois.[44] Lambert of Ardres tells how Arnold, the son of Baldwin II of Guines, frequented tournaments. He joined the ranks of many illustrious and noble figures, gaining glory and honour

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[42] *Aucassin et Nicolette*, ll.25-31.

[43] 'Deinde anno Domini 1175, mense Augosto, tornamentum inter Suessionem civitatem et Brainam castrum ex superbia et arrogantia a preclaris et probissimis militibus Campanensibus scilicet et Francis quampluribus, contra Balduinum comitem Hanoniensis cum 200 militibus et 1220 peditibus electis venit, et in parte sua duos sororios suos, scilicet Radulphum de Cociaco et Buchardum de Montemorenciaco, et cum eis Radulphum comitem Clarimontis, militem probissimum, habebat': Gislebert of Mons, *Chronicon Hanoniense*, pp.116-17.

[44] *Histoire*, ed. Meyer, ll.2909-21.

thereby.[45] Significantly, Arnold was keen on hearing of the exploits of Arthur and his knights. The cross-over between the events of literature and life is in fact a remarkable feature of the period,[46] and is discussed in more detail below. So tournaments attracted large numbers of knights from a variety of regions, some of whom held key political positions.

Another major occasion was the aforementioned tournament at Lagni-sur-Marne, in 1179. Tournaments often occurred as a part of key social events, for example coronations, Pentecost celebrations, and the creation of knights. Following the crowning of the son of Louis VII, many knights gathered for a tournament in Champagne.[47] This event was attended by nineteen counts, and 'three thousand' knights, according to the *Histoire*. Even allowing for the common exaggeration of numbers, this was clearly a large event. The grandness of the gathering is portrayed as a symptom of its importance:[48]

> A Leingni sor Marne fu pris
> Un torneiemenz si empris
> Que tels n'i out ne einz ne puis,

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[45] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.93, pp.604-5.

[46] Benson, 'The Tournament', pp.1-24; Duby, 'Youth in Aristocratic Society', p.112. The *Roman de la Rose* or *Guillaume de Dole*, which was dedicated to bishop Milon of Beauvais (1222-34) by its author Jean Renart, who was either familiar with, or lived in, northern France, describes a tournament at St. Trond which has been identified as a historical tournament which was held in Flanders in 1212: Jean Renart, *Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, ed. F.Lecoy, CFMA (Paris, 1963), ll.1644-2967. See J.W.Baldwin: 'French Chivalry Revisited: The *Guillaume de Dole* of Jean Renart', *Haskins Society Journal*, 1 (1989), pp.182-91; J.W.Baldwin, 'Jean Renart et le tournoi de Saint-Trond: Une conjonction de l'histoire et de la littérature', *Annales*, 45 (1990), pp.565-88; J.W.Baldwin, ''Once there was an Emperor...': A Political Reading of the Romances of Jean Renart', *Jean Renart and The Art of Romance*, ed. N.Vine Durling (Gainesville, 1997), pp.45-82. Renart also dedicated his *Roman de l'Escoufle* to Count Baldwin VI of Hainault.

[47] Painter argues for a connection between the coronation of Philip and the attraction of such nobles to this tournament: Painter, *William Marshal*, n.40; cf. the Mainz court at which Barbarossa's son wore the crown, discussed in Chapter One above.

[48] R.Barber suggests a figure of one thousand knights: *The Reign of Chivalry* (New York, 1980), p.24.

Si come en l'estorie le truis,
Quer veirs fu que li giemble reis
I fu a molt riches conreis
Telz comme orrez encore anuit,
Quer gel dirrei, cui qu'il anuit.
(*Histoire*, ll.4457-64)

This event had important political significance, and yet what is most brought out in this account is the lavishness of the event. Clearly the chroniclers admire the tournament, in all its grandeur.

It is now appropriate to compare areas of similarity or disparity in the accounts of tournaments in chivalric romances, in order to understand whether they celebrate the tournament in the same way as chronicles, and whether they oppose the anti-tournament literature explored above. The knights of romances do not often have reservations about tournaments, even of the fleeting kind experienced by Aucassin. On the contrary, we find that tournaments are often the ultimate expression of a knight's chivalry, and that chivalric romances promote an image of tournaments which directly contradicts the anxieties about booty and the interpretation of vainglory highlighted above.

As part of the comparative study of discourses on the tournament, this section will examine significant similarities between chivalric romances and chronicles, from which we may learn more about contemporary attitudes to tournaments and what they meant to knights. In beginning an examination of the portrayal of tournaments in chivalric romances, it is important to acknowledge the opinion that romances give an unrealistic portrayal of tournaments.[49] One

[49] Benson describes the romance tournament as a 'distillation' of elements of the real tournament: 'The Tournament', pp.14-16.

characteristic of chivalric romances is their tendency to focus on the individual knight and his adventures, and consequently scholarly opinion has often held that they are unrepresentative in their portrayal of one-on-one fighting, when real tournaments actually involved fighting *en masse*.[50] Nevertheless, the tournaments of chivalric romances contain key elements of real experience, championing acts and attitudes which engaged with the real secular values of prowess and honour.[51]

One way in which this emerges is the fact that historical tournaments often accompanied key religious feasts and public events, such as weddings and coronations, as we have seen, and they commonly lasted for more than one day.[52] All of these elements are typically reflected in romance accounts. Let us consider in detail the tournament which takes place between York and Edinburgh in *Erec et Enide*. The tournament begins with an opening lance-charge, which was known as the *commençailles*,[53] and is then immediately followed by a clash of men *en masse*:

> Tuit s'antre vienent a eslais.
> D'armes est toz coverz li chans;
> D'anbes parz fremist toz li rans;
> An l'estor lieve li escrois,
> Des lances est molt granz li frois;
> Lances brisent et escuz troent,
> Li hauberc faussent et descloent,
> Seles vuident, chevalier tument,
> Li cheval süent et escument.
> La triaent les espees tuit

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[50] Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, p.2.
[51] Strickland distinguishes between the influence of Christian doctrines of guilt and shame, and secular codes of honour and reputation: *War and Chivalry*, pp.98-9.
[52] Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, pp.173-6.
[53] For example, *Histoire*, ed. Meyer, l.3501.

Sor cez qui chieent a grant bruit;
Li un corent por les foiz prendre
Et li autre por l'estor randre. (ll.2104-16)

All came together at full gallop. The field was entirely covered with armour. On both sides, the lines stirred noisily; in the mêlée the tumult grew; great was the shattering of lances. Lances were broken and shields were pierced, hauberks dented and torn apart, saddles were emptied, knights fell, horses sweated and foamed. Swords were drawn above those who fell to the ground with a clatter. Some ran to accept the pledges of the defeated and others to resume the mêlée.[54]

This passage is neither refined nor gentle, but reflects the fury and the commotion of a real tournament. The speed and frenzy of the onslaught, the tumbling of knights and sweating of horses, and the breaking of lances and capturing of men, add a realism to the event which matches the poignant moment in the *Histoire*, which describes how at the 1177 tournament at Pleurs, William Marshal had his bent helmet detached from his head with the help of an anvil (l.3102). Moments such as these lend a certain appeal to the texts: as Benson puts it, Philip of Flanders and his retinue would have had 'no problem identifying their favourite sport'.[55] Men fall from their horses and are injured in these tournaments as they were in real life. So once again the violent nature of tourneys is recognised, but here it is in fact relished rather than criticised.

Yet the tournament of chivalric romances is certainly more than a bloody fracas. It is a means of gaining public reputation, as well as booty. Proving his prowess at the tournament is the ultimate goal of the knight of romance, and

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[54] Kibler, pp.63-4.
[55] Benson, 'The Tournament', p.13.

active participation in tournaments is often the symbol of a knight's chivalric attributes of prowess and renown.

Indeed, sometimes the tournament is not only admired, but also required as concrete proof of a knight's chivalry. For example, in the *Conte du Graal*, the tournament between Tibaut of Tintagel and Meliant of Liz occurs because Tibaut's daughter requires proof of Meliant's prowess before she will accept him as a lover (ll.4833-75). Similarly in *Erec et Enide* the hero, over-indulging himself in his newly-found marital bliss, is accused of recreance by fellow knights, and is specifically criticised for neglecting his tournament duties:

> Ce disoit trestoz li barnages
> Que granz diax ert et granz domages,
> Quant armes porter ne voloit
> Tex ber com il estre soloit.
> Tant fu blasmez de totes genz,
> De chevaliers et de sergenz,
> Qu'Enyde l'oï antre dire
> Que recreant aloit ses sire
> D'armes et de chevalerie:
> Mout avoit changiee sa vie. (ll.2455-64)
>
> All the nobles said that it was a great shame and sorrow that a lord such as he once was no longer wished to bear arms. He was so blamed by everyone, knights and men-at-arms alike, that Enide heard them say among themselves that her lord was becoming recreant with respect to arms and knighthood, because he had profoundly changed his way of life.[56]

In *Le Chevalier au Lion* Yvain is warned by Gawain not to neglect deeds of prowess, but to accompany him abroad to tournaments, regardless of the consequences:

> Or primes doit vostre pris croistre.
> Ronpez le frain et le chevoistre,

[56] Kibler, p.67.

S'irons tornoier moi et vos,
Que l'en ne vos apiaut jalos.
Or ne devez vos pas songier,
Mes les tornoiemanz ongier
Et anpanre, et tot fors giter,
Que que il vos doie coster. (ll.2501-08)

A man must be concerned with his reputation before all else! Break the leash and yoke and let us, you and me, go to the tourneys, so no once can call you a jealous husband! Now is not the time to dream your life away but to frequent tournaments, engage in combat, and joust vigorously, whatever it might cost you.[57]

As it happens, the cost is great indeed. When Yvain fails to return to his wife as promised, he loses her love. Yet while this romance explores the difficulties of balancing the demands of love and chivalry, the point which needs to be stressed is that the importance of tournaments is not seriously questioned here, and Yvain actually redeems himself as the story progresses by performing further physical knightly acts.

Gawain's advice to Yvain is similar to that given to the young Marshal by the lord of Tancarville, who implored William to return from England as soon as possible, seeking once more the realm of tournaments and knightly prowess in France:

En esrer ne en tornïer
Si le soleit l'om enveier
En Brutaingne ou en Normandie
Por hanter la chevalerie,
O par tut la ou l'om turneie;
Kar eissi covient tote voie
Faire com vos me oez conter
Qui d'armes velt en pris monter. (*Histoire,* ll.1541-48)

[57] Kibler, p.326.

According to chivalric romances, the problems surrounding tournaments are more of a more domestic nature than a moral issue as perceived by the Church. The portrayal of tournaments in romances and chronicles reflects the point of view of secular nobleman who understood the ideological and economic importance of tournaments, and confirms that this was one of the important ways by which they felt cohesion.

So in romances the tournament was a publicly recognised symbol of chivalry, and it was a place to express its values. Non-participation in tournaments could be a source of ridicule and contempt. In the *Conte du Graal*, Gawain fails to participate in a tournament and is abused by a group of damsels, who speculate as to the reason why he is abstaining:

> "Marcheanz est, nel dites mes
> Qu'il doie a tournoïer antandre!
> Toz cez chevaus mainne il a vandre".
> - Einz est changierres, fe la quarte.
> Il n'a talant que il departe
> As povres chevaliers ancui
> Cest avoir que il mainne o lui.
> Ne cuidiez pas que ge vos mante,
> C'est monoie et vesselmante
> An ces vessiax et an ces males. (ll.5060-67)
>
> "He's a merchant, don't say any more about his participating in the tournament: he's brought all those horses to sell."
> "No, he's a money-changer," said the fourth. "He doesn't have any intention of sharing those goods he's brought with him among the poor knights today. Don't think I'm lying to you: it's money and dishes he's got in those bags and chests."[58]

The maidens assume that as Gawain is not engaging in combat, he must be at the tournament for mercenary purposes. *Largesse*, a fundamental quality of

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[58] Kibler, p.443.

exemplary knights, was on display at tournaments, both in romances and in reality. In *Erec et Enide*, despite his own personal lapse in military activity, Erec notably still provides his knights with generous supplies for attending tournaments (ll.2460-7). In the *Conte du Graal*, Gawain's apparent lack of interest in fighting is put down to his being a money-changer, or a merchant, or a tax evader. Gawain is in fact unable to participate in the tournament because he has promised to attend a battle elsewhere, and is honour-bound to keep to his word. This passage suggests the importance which was placed on knightly activity at tournaments, and draws a definite distinction between knights and other attendees of these events.

Historical sources show that tournaments provided a real opportunity for publicly displaying wealth, and a means of redistributing resources among knights and gaining supporters. Thus, Count Philip of Flanders justified his reputation for *largesse* when Henry the Young King heard of a tournament to be held between Gournay and Ressons in 1176, but was not suitably equipped to take part. Philip furnished the knights with ample armour and equipment, allowing them to participate:

> Sanz demorance e sans ennui
> Eurent trestot outréement
> E si trés acesméement
> Qu'onques miels ne vi, que jo sache.
> E quant li reis vint a la place,
> Molt fu richement acesmez.
> A peine peüst estre esmez
> Li erneis, li acesmemenz
> Ne li riches contenemenz;
> Mais tant sachiez de verité
> Qu'il ne semblout pas enprunté. (*Histoire*, ll.2486-96)

The combined ideological and economic role of tournaments is highlighted further in this text by means of the protagonist's reason for participating in tournaments. During the joyous feasting at Tancarville after the battle at Drincourt, during which, according to the *Histoire*, the Normans defeated the attacking counts of Flanders, Boulogne and Ponthieu, it was noted that the newly-knighted William had fought to save the town without amassing any treasure. William was consequently unable to grant a request from the lord of Tancarville for a gift from the spoils of war, such as a cropper or an old collar:

> "Mareschal, donez mei un don
> Par amors & par guerredon."
> -Voluntiers, quei? - "Une cropiére
> Ou sevals une viez coliére."
> Cil qui gaires ne fu parliers
> Ne malveisdos ne boubanciers
> Li dist: "Si Dex me beneïe,
> Unkes n'en oi nule en ma vie." (ll.1145-52)

William learns of the importance of gathering such treasure from the surprised reply he receives: 'Mareschal, que est ce que vos dites?/ De poi de chose m'escondites' (ll.1153-4). Again economic constraints imposed on knights are emphasised in the descriptions of William's consequent hardship: having no money for a horse, William was forced to sell his mantle and buy a pack-horse with the money he received (ll.1190-3).[59]

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[59] 'A first-class warhorse cost ten to thirty times as much as an ordinary "horse for the march"': Barber, *The Reign of Chivalry*, p.24. Also *Cligés,* ll.3565-75; Kibler, p.166. Horses are discussed in more detail below.

The Marshal soon began to take care to capture booty. After this event, he wanted to attend a tournament near Le Mans, but was aware that he needed to obtain a proper war-horse in order to take part (ll.1224-6). Finally he was given a fine war-horse ('destriers') by William of Tancarville (ll.1262-1302). Later, at another tournament at Joigni, a herald asked William to give him a horse (ll.3489-90), and the Marshal procured one from the first knight to ride onto the field (ll.3492-520). William's success at tournaments reached its height in 1177 when he took up the offer of Roger de Gaugie, a fellow knight of the king's household, to enter into a partnership, attending tournaments for the pursuit of honour and financial gain. This lasted for two years, and the commercial gains made by William were recorded by his clerk, who writes that 103 knights were captured between Whitsun and Lent.[60]

In the early 1180s, William's career took a change of course. Having lost favour with the Young King, due to rumours of an affair with his wife, Queen Margaret (according to the *Histoire*), William attended the Christmas court at Caen in 1182, and offered to prove his innocence by trial by battle, but was refused.[61] He consequently left the court, and purchased a war-horse from the Lagni fair and in January attended a tournament at Clermont at which he was offered large sums of money by esteemed men, including Count Philip of Flanders and the duke of Burgundy, in return for his service (ll.5923-6170).

William Marshal's chivalric career spanned many years, and provides an

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[60] *Histoire*, ed. Meyer, ll.3381-424.
[61] *Histoire*, ed. Meyer, ll.5693-848. The actions of William of Tancarville at this feast are discussed in Chapter One.

example (albeit an unusually successful one) of the economic and political implications of tournaments.

The career of William Marshal mirrors to some extent Duby's model of the *juvenes*, in which he describes the young landless knights who set out in search of fortune, and were the fuel behind much of the enthusiasm for tournaments.[62] However, it is important not to idealise the lives of knights such as William Marshal. The lifestyle of knights-errant was not approved by all fathers; and it was impossible for lesser knights to maintain the knightly lifestyle without some supplementary support. Equipment was expensive, and as the tournament developed it became an increasingly exclusive activity. Poorer knights were land-bound, relying on farming to supplement their income.[63] As chivalric romances recognise, despite the emphasis placed on glory, money was an important fact of life. The motives for noble participation in tournaments were direct financial gain as well as social advancement, and, of course, the sheer love of the sport. Chivalric texts thus hold up the tournament as an event, not just for ideological reasons, but also because they had a realistic appreciation of how knights supported themselves economically.

Honour and booty, two core aims of romance tournaments, thus had a real social significance in attracting a reputation and ensuring a livelihood.[64] In

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[62] Duby, 'Youth in Aristocratic Society', pp.112-22.
[63] Rösener, 'Ritterliche Wirtschaftsverhältnisse', p.307.
[64] Barber and Barker note that in *Le Roman du Hem* a complaint is made about the poverty caused by Louis IX's ban on tournaments: *Tournaments*, p.38.

romances, as also in the *Histoire*, the heroes are presented as fighting more for glory than for booty. Erec is one example:

> Erec ne voloit pas entandre
> A cheval n'a chevalier prandre,
> Mes a joster et a bien feire
> Por ce que sa proesce apeire. (ll.2175-8)
>
> Erec was not intent upon winning horses or taking prisoners, but on jousting and doing well in order to make evident his prowess.[65]

He still, however, captures many horses (ll.2182-3). In the *Conte du Graal* Gawain gains four horses, valuable commodities, which he promptly gives away (l.5582).[66] Perhaps this account reflects some embarrassment about some of the motives behind tournaments, but it deflects these in favour of promoting the prowess of the knights involved.

Honourableness and the capture of booty are united concepts, rather than mutually exclusive as Church accounts suggest. Indeed, the continued success of tournaments may also be due to the fact that the Church itself could benefit materially from them, and relationships between priests and the local community were too important to sacrifice to unpopular rules.[67] There was some degree of concern that tournaments detracted attention, and funds, from the crusades, which many tried to propose as the more worthy pursuit: for example, in 1193,

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[65] Kibler, p.64.

[66] In the romance of *King Florus*, tournaments are again seen as an opportunity for amassing winnings. A knight from Flanders, who is obsessed with tournaments, is aided by his squire Robert in bearing away the prize of tournaments, and procuring 'five hundred pounds of rent of land': *Li Contes Dou Roi Flore et de la Bielle Jehane,* ed. L.Moland and C.D'Héricault, *Nouvelles Françoises en Prose du XIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1856), p.91; Mason (trans.), *Aucassin*, pp.92-4. See Chapter Three.

[67] A man of the church was reliant on the goodwill of his neighbours: Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, p.141.

Celestine III banned tournaments on account of the situation in the Holy Land.[68] Yet at the same time tournaments were an important recruiting-ground for the crusades, at which 'moral pressure' was put on knights to devote their services to the holy cause.[69] For example, in November 1199 a tournament was held at Écri in Champagne, under the auspices of Count Thibaut of Champagne, who took the cross and was joined by other key figures. In his chronicle of the Fourth Crusade, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, the Marshal of Champagne, provides a long list of names of the participants. In the year following the preaching campaign of Fulk of Neuilly, 'Thibaut, Count of Champagne and Brie, took the cross, in company with Count Louis of Blois and Chartres. Count Thibaut was a young man of only twenty-two while Count Louis was just twenty-seven.'[70] Such events may in fact have served to link the tournament and the crusade, with the crusade representing the pinnacle of knightly achievement, given substance by the valuable experience gained in mock battle, rather than supporting the absolute distinction between crusade and tournament which was being upheld by the Church.

Among the many opinions for and against the holding of tournaments, accounts in romance reflect more readily the point of view of noblemen, and are close to the *Histoire* in their accurate representation of contemporary notions of

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[68] Denholm-Young, 'The Tournament', p.243.
[69] Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, pp.145-6.
[70] *Joinville and Villehardouin, Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. M.R.B.Shaw (Harmondsworth, 1963), p.29. Also: 'On Ash Wednesday, at the very beginning of the following Lent, in the town of Bruges, Count Baldwin of Flanders and Hainaut took the cross, together with his wife, the countess Marie, who was the count of Champagne's sister. Their example was followed by the count Baldwin's brother Henry and his nephew Thierry, the son of the count Philip of Flanders': *Joinville and Villehardouin, Chronicles*, trans. Shaw, p.30.

chivalric reputation and glory, notions which fuelled the growth of tournaments in the twelfth century along with thoughts of concrete financial gain. Nor was the appeal of such knightly activities entirely restricted to knights, as Gerald of Wales discovered one Pentecost when he was in lodgings at Arras, on his way home to England, and came upon Count Philip of Flanders (1170-91), the patron of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, in the company of a large and impressive retinue practising knightly acts in the square:

> Giraldo itaque versus Angliam iter agente, cum Atrebatum veniret in septimana Pentecostes, et juxta forum hospitatus esset; factus est tumultus in urbe magnus. Comes enim Flandriae Philippus, qui tantus erat, in hac urbe sua tunc existens, in foro, quod tanquam in urbis medio spatium magnum in quadranguli modum obtinebat, quintanam erigi fecerat, clypeum videlicet forte posti firmiter appensum, ubi tyrones et robusti juvenes equis admissis militaria negotia praeludendo, lanceas frangendo vel obstaculum transpenetrando, vires suas experirentur.[71]
>
> So he went on his way toward England and, when in the week of Pentecost he came to Arras and was lodged on the market-place, there was a great stir in the city. For Philip, Count of Flanders, being then in the city, caused a quintain to be set up in the market-place, a great square in the midst of the town; now a quintain is a strong shield hung securely to a beam, whereon aspirants for knighthood and stalwart youths mounted on galloping chargers may try their strength by breaking their lances or piercing the obstacle - a prelude this to the exercises of knighthood.

Gerald found himself captivated by these knightly goings-on:

> Giraldus etiam ab alto hospitii sui solio cuncta prospiciens, et utinam tanquam vana despicere valens, vidit comitem ipsum totque cum ipso viros nobiles, tot milites atque barones sericis indutos, tot equos egregios admitti, tot lanceas frangi, ut cum

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[71] Gerald of Wales, 'De Rebus a se gestis', *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J.S.Brewer (RS 21; London, 1861), I, p.50; H.E.Butler (trans.), *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis* (London, 1937), pp.69-70.

diligentia magna considerans singula, vix satis admirari posset universa.

And Gerald, who looked on from a lofty gallery in his lodgings (and would that he had been able to look down upon the sport as mere vanity!) saw the Count himself, and with him such a multitude of noble knights and barons, so many a fine horse galloping at the shield and so many lances broken, that, though he diligently watched each several thing, he could not sufficiently wonder at the whole.[72]

As Gerald watched these public demonstrations of knightly activity he felt unable to condemn the elaborate exercises which had been sponsored by Philip. While he wished he could share the dim views held by some other clerics who spoke out against tournaments, this man who was so vehement in expressing his opinions on the vanities of the court was overcome with awe at such a fine spectacle.

In his appreciation of knightly activities in spite of his better judgement, Gerald is comparable with Guido de Bazoches (c.1140-1203), a canon of Châlons-sur-Marne. He was a man educated in the liberal arts, who knew Henry the Liberal personally, travelling on the count's expedition in 1190, and writing a genealogy in which he linked Henry's ancestry to the earliest kings of France.[73] It appears that like Gerald, Guido was attracted to the knightly life. In a letter he described a scene in Champagne in which knights were jousting together in a field, with their armour shining, and a group - or army ('agmina') - of clerics sat nearby, enjoying philosophical discussions and recounting the

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[72] As a boy, Gerald's scholarly achievements were allegedly hampered by his brothers, and their competition in 'knightly tasks': *De Rebus*, c.2.

[73] See M.Bur, 'L'Image de la parenté chez les comtes de Champagne', *Annales*, 38 (1983), pp.1016-39.

glorious deeds of princes.[74] Even against their better judgement, these clerics were unable to resist the lure of the tournament and the glory it represented, however transitory they officially believed it was. This inner conflict illustrated by both Gerald of Wales and Guido de Bazoches confirms the appeal of the tournament, and it also explains why such conflicting opinions were in existence. In setting these texts against each other, the study has revealed that they were in fact in dialogue with each other in the twelfth century.

Conclusions

The tournaments of romance reflected and fed universally recognised chivalric values. In *Le Chevalier de la Charrete* a knight is described as feeling as good 'as if he had been praised in a tournament' (ll.1562-4), and this ethos materially influenced the careers of real knights on an individual scale. William the Marshal's reputation exceeded his rank when he was the one to knight the Young King, instead of the brother of the king.[75] Chivalric texts highlighted the positive chivalric qualities of the tournament, and historical tournaments offered practice which influenced to some degree behaviour in battle. In times of peace, the tournament was the place to prove one's prowess, and also an opportunity to collect as much booty as possible; the two are not always separate in romance, and the prowess of the hero is often highlighted by the number of men and

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[74] Guido de Bazoches, Letter 30, *Liber Epistolarum Guidonis de Basochis*, ed. H.Adolfsson (Stockholm, 1969), 126.

[75] Strickland suggests that Henry the Young was esteemed on his death mostly because of his *largesse* to knights at tournaments: *War and Chivalry*, p.104. The Young King held a grand court at Christmas in Rouen in 1172, which was attended by many knights, and his reputation for *largesse* is described in the *Histoire*, ll.5060ff.

horses he has captured, even if he does then give them away to others, which in turn serves to enhance his knightly *largesse.* However, the seeking and collection of glory and booty are in themselves not presented as morally wrong. In fact, the romances postulate a stronger scheme of rewards for what are seen as positive aspects of the tournament.

The ethics of the tournament, like the nature of the court, was a matter of heated debate. In the face of opposition to the tournament by numerous moralists, who disapproved of tournaments because of the unnecessary deaths they caused, and the licence they gave to the pursuit of financial gain and vainglory, romances present a more favourable picture. However, it does not seem that it was the purpose of the romances to euphemise tournaments or knights' love of them; and although their representations of tournaments in their 'distilled' state clearly filtered through into real society and were emulated, they do not shun the realities of the event itself. Even in romance tournaments, plenty of 'good' knights are slaughtered.[76] Tournaments are exciting and glorious in romances, which esteemed them and confirmed them as a fundamental part of knightly identity and concepts of chivalry. It was, in fact, through the celebration of tournaments, and their placing of this activity at the centre of knightly identity, that the romances had much of their effect.

The sense of enjoyment expressed in the romances over the tournament for its own sake, in all its secularity, reflects the fact that in real life the tournament was too popular an event for opposition to be consistently

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[76] Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, p.156.

successful. It seems far more likely that a knight would feel the power of identification evoked in a romance, both for its colourful activity, and its portrayal of practical problems, than the strict moral censure of the sort voiced by Jacques de Vitry: as Keen puts it, 'Simply to appear there, armed and mounted ... was in itself a demonstration of a man's right to mingle in an elite society, of his social identity.'[77] Ecclesiastical sanctions are not a big issue in romance accounts, reflecting their relative irrelevance in the face of the perceived chivalrousness of the activity, and highlighting the contrasting hold which positive views of the tournament had. There appears to be a difference between the views of monks and friars on the one hand, and secular clerics on the other. The writers of chivalric romances, who were usually secular clerics and whose audience included knights and clerics, present tournaments in a relatively unproblematic way. They do not challenge the existence of tournaments, and rather they appear to champion them, promoting tournaments as a commendable sport which had moral virtues, and communicating their appeal.

In the case of the tournament, then, the views of knights had precedence over the rulings of the Church and the monarchy. The actions of knighthood are here seen to exist separately from ecclesiastical opinion, a fact which emphasises the strength of knightly concepts of chivalry. Yet perhaps tourneying knights are not totally beyond salvation. The link made between tournaments and crusades, and the literary support of tournaments as an exciting and knightly

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[77] Keen, *Chivalry*, p.90.

thing to be a part of, suggests that to a knight, the tournament acted as an extension, rather than a rejection, of knightly concepts of chivalry and its social role. The tournament served to define its participants as members of a brotherhood, and, although ignored by some, and hated by many, to the significant number who took part it represented the ultimate opportunity to increase their knightly reputation, as a vital part of chivalry and its public expression.

Chapter Three: Largesse

Largesse, the knightly quality of generosity, is notable as one of the principal chivalric values of the twelfth century. In romance works, acts of *largesse* are celebrated, and often serve to enhance the reputation of a knight; and Count Henry 'the Liberal' of Champagne (1152-81) owed his name to it.[1] The pros and cons of *largesse* were furthermore debated in the letters and treatises of prominent figures who were connected with the court circles of northern France. The main purpose of this chapter is to investigate why *largesse* was a central chivalric value in the twelfth century. What was the significance of *largesse* in ideological terms; what were its perceived benefits (and risks); and how did it engage with the more concrete social concerns of members of the knightly classes? *Largesse* requires an excess: so, the question arises: was the ethos of generosity the by-product of superfluity, or did the acts of *largesse* heralded in the chivalric romances have a more significant social function?

The evidence to which we may turn in order to tackle these questions is widespread: *largesse* features in many text types, including letters, chronicles, historical narratives, and the charters of religious establishments, as well as chivalric romances. Previous studies of *largesse* have included some analysis of gift-giving in chivalric romances, and there has been a wealth of scholarship on the theme of pious donations.[2] Yet no study so far has provided a detailed and

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[1] Guiot de Provins refers to him as 'li plus larges hom du mont': 'Bible', ed. Orr, l.325.

[2] M.P.Whitney, 'Queen of Medieval Virtues: *Largesse*', *Vassar Medieval Studies*, ed. C.Forsyth (New Haven, 1923), pp.183-215; J.Merino, 'The Gift in Chrétien de Troyes: Largesse or Obligation?', *Journal of French and Italian Literature*, 13 (1979), pp.5-14; D.Boutet, 'Sur l'origine de le sens de la largesse arthurienne', *Le Moyen Âge*, 89 (1983), pp.397-411; B.H.

comparative textual analysis of the various representations of *largesse*, or combined this with a consideration of the textual communities and social ideologies behind them. For example, how does the vision of *largesse* in romances compare with that found in charters; do these representations reflect different ideas about *largesse* held by knights and clerics? This chapter attempts to span the gap between literary and historical analysis, which is so often evident, by providing a study of *largesse* which draws from a broad base of documents, and which situates representations of *largesse* in the broader perspective of twelfth-century noble society.

Before proceeding with a detailed analysis of *largesse*, it is worth considering the meanings of the term. 'Generosity' has a number of applications; this study focuses on the social meaning of *largesse* with particular emphasis on the theme of the 'gift', and the sense of exchange and social contract inherent in the gift-giving cycle. Thus, for the purposes of this study the gift is distinguished from aspects of commercial exchange (and from acts of alms-giving). Although 'gift' and 'commerce' are not entirely mutually exclusive[3] - indeed, the coexistence of chivalric and commercial values in the twelfth century will be

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Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049* (Ithaca, 1989); C.B. Bouchard, *Sword, Miter and Cloister: Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980-1198* (Ithaca, 1987); E.Z.Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property in Eleventh-Century Norman Law* (Chapel Hill, 1988); S.D.White, *Custom, Kinship and Gifts to Saints: The* Laudatio Parentum *in Western France, 1050-1150* (Chapel Hill, 1988); M.McLaughlin includes a review of scholarly approaches: *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1994), pp.4-20.

[3] Rosenwein reminds us that they represent, rather, two extreme ends of a scale: *To Be the Neighbor*, p.130; McLaughlin also emphasises the close links which did exist at times between commerce and the gift: *Consorting with Saints*, pp.146-7. See also C.Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London, 1982).

explored in the final section - an important sociological distinction may be made between the two types of economy. In gift economies, the emphasis lies on the social relationship which is symbolised by the gift; this relationship is of little or no importance in commercial, 'alienable' transactions, which focus rather on the actual commodity exchanging hands.

It is, then, the social place of *largesse* that will concern us here, beginning with the consciousness of *largesse* as a laudable quality, and the corresponding awareness of the need to give gifts. Anthropologists have described exchange as a social act, and one which serves to define and affirm social ties. At times when the gift itself is not of central importance, the actual act of giving is. In the words of John Davis, 'all exchanges have got social meaning'.[4] Marcel Mauss, whose work on the gift greatly influenced anthropological analysis, proposed that the pure gift does not exist, and highlighted its symbolic significance, asserting that 'the thing received is not inactive'.[5] His study highlighted three core elements in gift-exchange: giving, receiving, and reciprocating. These elements are all to be found in the gift-exchanges which we will be examining.

Several key themes are common to the texts explored in this chapter. For example, generosity of spirit is a central topos. The Latin origin of *largesse*, '*largitio*', denotes 'that which surges forth in abundance' and 'that which gives

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[4] J.Davis, *Exchange* (Buckingham, 1992), p.1.

[5] M. Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D.Halls (London, 1990), pp 11-12. For a critique of Mauss' findings, see Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor*, p.125f.

in abundance; generous, expansive (in the moral sense).'[6] Spontaneity is what literary critics, too, have seen in acts of giving in the early *roman courtois.* By contrast with the '*bourgeois* spirit' of the later Middle English romances,[7] *largesse* in Chrétien is supposed to be pure, and selfless. This sense of *largesse* still appears in modern dictionaries, where its definitions include: '**1.** Liberality, bountifulness, munificence; **2.** Liberal or bountiful bestowal of gifts; occas. lavish expenditure; *concr.* money or other gifts freely bestowed, e.g. by a sovereign upon some special occasion of rejoicing or the like; in parcularized sense: a free gift or dole of money, etc; **3.** *trans.* and *fig.* A generous or plentiful bestowal; something freely bestowed.'[8] But commerce played an important part in the economic development of France, as reflected in the thriving fairs of Champagne and Flanders. So, a question arises: just how far do acts of *largesse* stem from altruistic motives in these earlier romances, and how far is there a hidden agenda behind the giving of gifts? The sense of the attitude accompanying the gift, and the motivations of the giver, is found at the core of medieval debates about liberality, which concern themselves with how 'freely' a gift is to be made. An awareness of receiving or of making a 'return' accompanies many of the accounts of *largesse*, which raises the question, just how *large* is *largesse*? In addition, acts of *largesse* were often public acts: how

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[6] A.Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine: Histoire des mots* (Paris, 1939), pp.608-9 (608); quoted in J. Starobinski, *Largesse*, trans. J.M.Todd (Chicago, 1997), p.11.

[7] See the discussion of *Sir Amadace* in E.E.Foster (ed.), *Amis and Amiloun, Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace* (Kalamazoo, 1997), pp.111-14.

[8] *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J.A.Simpson and E.S.C.Weiner, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1989), p.661.

important were the symbolic and political dimensions of this socially recognised value?[9]

For another side to *largesse* - a dangerous, and sometimes even sinister, side - emerges at times. We will see that accompanying many of the references to *largesse* is a sense of the need to exercise caution, and an awareness of the dangers of excessive giving; and examples of both underspending and overspending occur in our texts. These issues often intrude on the ideal of *largesse*; their tone and expression in the texts must be examined.

The bestowal of gifts and rewards was not, of course, a custom unique to the twelfth century: it was preceded, for example, by the Germanic custom of the distribution of treasure by a leader (or 'ring-bearer') to his retainers,[10] and systems of gift-exchange were in existence in 'primitive' societies long before this time. Significantly, as Putter has noted, the word 'community' reflects the integral part played in society by the exchange of gifts, stemming as it does from 'con' (shared) and 'munus' (gift).[11] The twelfth-century debate about liberality was also profoundly influenced by the treatises of classical authors such as Cicero and Seneca, as we shall see. What makes the theme of *largesse* so interesting in the twelfth century, though, is the specific developments which it underwent, in the Christianisation of the classical tradition, and in its emergence

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[9] Acts of *largesse* can provide symbolic wealth, which may be 'converted' into power in the future: P.Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R.Nice (Cambridge, 1977), p.181.
[10] L.K.Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London, 1978), p.5.
[11] A.Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities in *Sir Amadace*', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 51, no.203 (2000), pp.371-94 (378); E.Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. E.Palmer (London, 1973), p.79.

as a chivalric virtue, personified in the figure of *Largesse*, in a society in which monetary transactions were actually becoming increasingly common.

At the same time as we see the flowering of the virtue of *largesse* in the northern French chivalric romances, we witness an increase in the use of money and systems of credit.[12] Such developments were not always welcomed, and satire of the acceptance of gifts by religious institutions was common.[13] We must therefore ask how far the ideology of *largesse* was becoming threatened by the monetary economy,[14] and explore whether this chivalric ideal was actively promoted as a knightly value in opposition to the ideologies of the rising bourgeoisie.

Largesse was a desirable quality, one which could be closely tied to issues of honour, reputation, and social position, and a system which could make its own kind of economic sense, regulating the movement of goods, as well as serving to ensure the loyalty of warriors. The various issues raised above will be dealt with by dividing the chapter into three sub-sections, as detailed below.

3.i. The ideal of *largesse* was much debated in the twelfth century, with a particular focus on its nature and motivations. Many of these twelfth-century

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[12] Little has argued that the Germanic economic system, which involved exchange 'without specific, calculated values' being attached to goods, underwent a change after c.1050, when it came into contact with more commercial approaches: *Religous Poverty*, p.8. For ideas about *largesse* succumbing to the profit economy, see Duby, *The Early Growth*, p.270; Pounds, *An Economic History*, p.206; McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, pp.13-14, 251; Kellogg explores how these changes are reflected in twelfth- and thirteenth-century vernacular narrative: *Medieval Artistry and Exchange*.

[13] Accusations of 'usury' were brought about by the uneasy coexistence of social ideals with an increase in production and systems of credit: J.and F.Gies, *Merchants and Moneymen*: *The Commercial Revolution 1000-1500* (London, 1972), p.36; also LeGoff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economics and Religion in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988).

[14] 'We should not assume that the meaning of familiar acts - of gift, sales and claims - remains the same simply because their forms persist': Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor*, p.11.

writers drew from classical works, especially those of Cicero and Seneca.[15] Hunt has demonstrated the influence of classical authors on the *Conte du Graal* of Chrétien de Troyes.[16] This inherited debate about *largesse* provides a useful starting point for examining the ideological background to representations of *largesse*. The section analyses the use that twelfth-century writers made of the classical material, and how the debate filtered through into non-clerical circles. The section ends with a detailed analysis of Chrétien de Troyes's comments about *largesse* in the prologue to *Le Conte du Graal*, which draws together the elements under discussion.

3.ii. *Largesse* was not merely an abstract principle, and having explored some of the issues at the heart of medieval discussions, the study moves on (3.ii.a) to examine acts of *largesse* and their social ramifications, discussing first some examples from romances of the lavish display of generosity at public gatherings, and the reputations for *largesse* of contemporary figures, and then (3.ii.b) investigating donations made by nobles to monasteries in order to see if similar social and political factors can be seen to be operating. The key question tackled is: how do these acts of giving relate to professed ideologies of *largesse*?

3.iii. Chivalric romances have often been accused of idealism, or even escapism, as discussed above. How true is this charge in the case of *largesse*? The third section examines further the historicity of ideologies of giving in chivalric romances, by exploring the details of gift exchange in romances, with

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[15] Seneca, *Moral Essays*, III, ed. and trans. J.W.Basore (London, 1935); Cicero, *De officiis*, ed. and trans. W.Miller (London, 1913).
[16] T. Hunt, 'The Prologue to Chrestien's *Li Contes del Graal*', *Romania*, 92 (1971), pp.359-79.

particular attention to money, payment and reciprocation. Pierre Bourdieu has asserted that in gift-giving communities, there is a wilful 'misrecognition' of economic issues,[17] in other words they fail to acknowledge the economic functions of *largesse*. Does this statement apply to acts of *largesse* in chivalric romances? Here we explore the pressures of obligation, and problems of poverty, in seeking to establish how knights survive in chivalric romances.

Having considered *largesse* in these three ways, we can then frame overall conclusions about the social meaning of this knightly ideal, and its role in northern France in the twelfth century.

3.i Quid est ergo beneficium? The Ideology of *Largesse*

In the opening line of his work of benefits, *De beneficiis*, written in the first century AD and addressed to his friend, the aptly-coined Aebutius Liberalis of Lyons, Seneca complained that:

> Inter multos ac varios errores temere inconsulteque viventium nihil propemodum indignius, vir optime Liberalis, dixerim, quam quod beneficia nec dare scimus nec accipere.
>
> Among the many and diverse errors of those who live reckless and thoughtless lives, almost nothing that I can mention, excellent Liberalis, is more disgraceful than the fact that we do not know how either to give or to receive benefits. (I.1)

Similarly, understanding the proper manner in which to give and to receive benefits was of great importance to medieval writers who approached the subject of liberality. Many works discuss the morality of gift-exchange, in terms of the attitude and status of the giver and the recipient, and the nature of the gift itself.

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[17] Bourdieu, *Outline*, p.183.

This first section will explore some of these concerns which lie at the heart of their works.

The accounts provided by Cicero and Seneca, and also Valerius Maximus, had the greatest effect on medieval attitudes. These writers found their way into widely available works such as the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury:

> Valerius Maximus, sed et Cicero, refert quod in Alexandro hanc profusionem pecuniae Philippus arguerit; et epistolae quidem uerba sunt haec: Quod te malum rationis in istam spem induxit ut eos tibi fideles putes quos pecunia corriptisses? [18]
>
> Valerius Maximus and Cicero as well relate that Philip reproved such lavish expenditure in the case of Alexander; in fact these are the very words of his letter: "What defect of reason has led you to hope that those whom you have corrupted with money will be faithful to you?"

Thus, it makes good sense to begin our analysis by examining those ideas about *largesse* expressed in the works of Cicero and Seneca which were taken up by twelfth-century writers.

Having made his initial diagnosis about liberality, with which this section began, Seneca sets out what he sees as the principles of beneficence. We may pose the same question as Seneca: 'What, then, is a benefit?'

> Benevola actio tribuens gaudium capiensque tribuendo in id, quod facit, prona et sponte sua parata. Itaque non, quid fiat aut quid detur, refert, sed qua mente.
>
> It is the act of a well-wisher who bestows joy and derives joy from the bestowal of it, and is inclined to do what he does from

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[18] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb, II, VIII.2, p.235; trans. J.B.Pike, *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers* (Minneapolis, 1938), p.301. Cf Cicero, *De officiis*, ed. Millor, ii.15.53-5. These 'anecdotal' accounts would be one of the most appealing and effective forms for a medieval audience: G.Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (London, 1956), p.77.

> the prompting of his own will. And so what counts is, not what is done or what is given, but the *spirit of the action.*[19]

This sense of the *spirit* behind the gift runs through Seneca's account. According to Seneca a large gift is worthless if given ungraciously:

> Exiguum est, quod in me contulit, sed amplius non potuit; at hic quod dedit, magnum est, sed dubitavit ... et placere non ei, cui praestabat, voluit; ambitioni dedit, non mihi.
>
> The benefit which one man bestowed upon me is small, but he was not able to give more; that which another gave me is great, but he hesitated ... and the person he tried to please was not the one on whom he bestowed his gift - he made an offering, not to me, but to his pride.[20]

Simply to give is not enough: Seneca upholds the idea that gifts should be given from the heart, even secretly, and without self-publicity: as he says, 'Contentus eris te teste' ('You will be content to have yourself your witness', II.ix.2). Yet in *De beneficiis* Seneca tells how Alexander, in contrast, gave the gift of a city to a poor man:

> Urbem cuidam Alexander donabat, vesanus et qui nihil animo nisi grande conciperet. Cum ille, cui donabatur, se ipse mensus tanti muneris invidiam refugisset dicens non convenire fortuanae suae: "Non quaero," inquit, "quid te accipere deceat, sed quid me dare."
>
> Alexander - madman that he was, and incapable of conceiving any plan that was not grandiose - once presented somebody with a whole city. When the man to whom he was presenting it had taken his own measure, and shrank from incurring the jealousy that so great a gift would arouse, Alexander's reply was: "I am concerned, not in what is becoming for you to receive, but in what is becoming for me to give."[21]

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[19] Seneca, *De ben.*, ed. Basore, I.vi.1, my emphasis.
[20] Seneca, *De ben.*, ed. Basore, I.vii.3.
[21] Seneca, *De ben.*, ed. Basore, II.xvi.1-2

The figure of Alexander the Great proved a popular image of *largesse* in the Middle Ages. For example, the *Alexandreis* of Walter of Châtillon, which was written c.1171-1181, reflects the reputation for *largesse* enjoyed by this character: it begins 'How generously the Duke of Macedon/ dispensed his wealth'.[22] Yet representations of Alexander's liberality did not always work in his favour. Alexander received a mixed response in twelfth-century works, where at times his arrogant nature and his unsatiable appetite for power combine, and his excessive *largesse* is described as prodigality.[23] This is indeed the charge laid against him by Seneca. Alexander's gift of a city is inappropriate in relation to the social status of the two men, which clearly is a matter of some delicacy, and Alexander's refusal to recognise this is a failure on his part. Seneca's commentary is damning:

> Nihil enim per se quemquam decet; refert, qui det, cui, quando, quare, ubi, et cetera ... Tumidissimum animal! Si illum accipere hoc non decet, nec te dare.
>
> Nothing, in itself, makes a becoming gift for any man; it all depends upon who gives it and who receives it - the when, wherefore, and where of the gift ... You puffed-up creature! If it is not becoming for the man to accept the gift, neither is it becoming for you to give it.[24]

The power of the gift as a social statement, and the importance of all three elements of the gift exchange (gift, giver, and recipient) give way to Alexander's one-sided notions of attaining public glory through acts of *largesse*.

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[22] Walter de Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, trans. D.Townsend (Philadelphia, 1996), I, ll.1-2, p.5.
[23] See Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*; M.Gosman, *La Légende d'Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française du 12e siècle* (Amsterdam, 1997).
[24] Seneca, *De ben.*, ed. Basore, II.xvi.1-2.

According to the classical writers, excessive giving can have serious moral effects on both the giver and the recipient. It leads to cupidity, so that Alexander, 'homo super mensuram iam humanae superbiae tumens' ('puffed up as he was beyond the limits of human pride', *De ben.*V.vi.1), falls victim to greed and the reckless striving for more:

> Non satis apparebat inopem esse, qui extra naturae terminos arma proferret, qui se in profundum inexploratum et immensum aviditate caeca prosus immitteret?
>
> Was it not quite clear that it was a man in need who pushed his arms beyond the bounds of nature, who, driven on by reckless greed, plunged headlong into an unexplored and boundless sea?[25]

The dangers of excessive *largesse* could be political as well as moral. Where exchange is a basis for power, it can also be the root of corruption.[26] It was the orator Cicero who emphasised the political ramifications of unbounded generosity, in his treatise on moral duties, *De officiis*, which was written in the form of a letter addressed to his son, Marcus Tullius (b.65 BC):

> Nam praeclare Ennius: Bene facta male locata male facta arbitror.
>
> For, as Ennius[27] says so admirably,
> "Good deeds misplaced, methinks, are evil deeds."[28]

In his *De officiis*, Cicero also presents the letter which was allegedly written by Philip to his son Alexander, warning him of the consequences of his spending habits. Attempting to buy favour can lead to political problems, and one must

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[25] Seneca, *De ben.*, ed. Basore, VII.ii.6.
[26] P.Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1992), p.74.
[27] Quintus Ennius (239-169 B.C.), 'Sceneca fab. inc.', in H.D.Jocelyn (ed.), *The Tragedies of Ennius* (Cambridge, 1967), 349, p.147.
[28] Cicero, *De offic.*, ed. Millor, II.xviii.62.

consider the recipients carefully. Moreover, basic financial factors must also be considered in an act of *largesse*, in which not just the needs of the recipient, but also the resources of the giver, are important. Discretion and moderation are thus required in order to avoid a system of bribery, and also because ultimately *largesse* is self-limiting:

> Ita benignitate benignitas tollitur; qua quo in plures usus sis, eo minus in multos uti possis.
>
> Liberality is thus forestalled by liberality, for the more people one has helped with gifts of money, the fewer one can help.[29]

The problems of excessive giving (and underspending) will be further illustrated at other points in the chapter, including references to situations of poverty caused by each of these extremes.

The story of Alexander and the city was taken up by the twelfth-century authors as an illustration of the importance of correct giving, including Peter Cantor[30] and Peter Abelard (b.1079), who cited *De beneficiis* (V.vi.1) with the same view of Alexander's boastful and grasping nature:

> Unde Seneca de Beneficiis libro V: Alexander Macedonum gloriari solebat a nullo se beneficiis victum.[31]
>
> As Seneca says in *De beneficiis* Book V, Alexander, king of the Macedonians, used to boast that no one had outdone him in benefits.

The *Moralium dogma philosophorum* cites Cicero and Seneca extensively in the section on liberality. This may be the work of William of Conches (c.1080-

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[29] Cicero, *De offic.*, ed. Millor, II.xv.52-3.
[30] Peter Cantor, 'Verbum Abbreviatum', PL 205, 21-554 (150).
[31] Peter Abelard, 'Sermones', sermon 33, PL 178, 582-607 (592).

1154/1160), who tutored the sons of Geoffrey Plantagenet. The text includes the story of Alexander and the city:

> Melius Alexander qui, cum daret civitatem cuidam dicenti non convenire civitatem humili fortune sue, respondit: 'Non quero quid te opporteat accipere sed quid me dare.'[32]

The frequent adoption of this story by medieval writers demonstrates their concern about the nature and role of the gift, and the relationship between giver and recipient.[33]

Evidence suggests that these discussions directly infiltrated chivalric circles. Many of the writers on *largesse* had direct connections with key figures at the courts of northern France, and dedicated their works to them. For example, the *Alexandreis*, which survives in over 200 manuscripts,[34] can be linked to the patronage circle of Henry the Liberal: Walter dedicated it to William of Blois, archbishop of Rheims (1176-1212), son of Thibaut IV and brother of Henry the Liberal, whose wife was the patron of Chrétien's *Lancelot*. William's teacher, Etienne de Alinerra, seems to have been a clerk of Count Henry's in the 1160s, and his name appears in charters from Provins between 1164 and 1174.[35] In 1176 he became chancellor to the count, and accompanied him to the Holy Land in 1179. Furthermore, the phrase 'Ad comitatem Henricum' appears in a

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[32] William of Conches, *Moralum dogma philosophorum*: J.Holmberg (ed.), *Das Moralium dogma philosophorum des Guillaume de Conches: Lateinisch, Altfranzösisch und Mittelniederfränkisch* (Uppsala, 1929), p.15.

[33] In *Durmart le Galois,* each receives a gift according to his rank: most receive gold and silver, and the poor knights are given horses and palfreys, 'as is courtois': M.Whitney, 'Queen of Medieval Virtues', p.192.

[34] The popularity of the *Alexandreis* is discussed by Townsend: *Alexandreis*, p.xi.

[35] B.N.Sargent-Baur, 'Alexander and the *Conte du Graal*', *Arthurian Literature*, 14 (1996), pp.1-18 (14).

manuscript of his poems. This demonstrates the transmission and expression of key ideas within an introspective circle of people.

The *Moralium dogma* was written for Henry II (1154-89), and versions of this text sit side by side in manuscripts with the romances of Chrétien de Troyes.[36] Its popularity is also illustrated by the fact that it was translated into the vernacular. Moreover, the impact of its ideas is reflected in its use by Gerald of Wales in the *De principis instructione*. Gerald, whose connections with court life have already been explored, showed an interest in the classical idea of *measure* in giving. To give is good, but measure is necessary:

> Dandum est igitur, dandum; sed tamen habendus est modus in dando.
> Si modum igitur in dando servaveris, *munificentiae virtus est*; si autem modum *excesseris*, prodigalitatis procul dubio crimen incurris.[37]

Without measure, prodigality results in corruption. Prodigality he presents as one of two vices to be avoided, the other being avarice. Gerald too quotes Seneca (*De ben.*ii.15) and Cicero (*De offic.*ii,15), via the *Moralium dogma*.

These issues converge in Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du Graal*, in a passage which reveals the extent to which the 'academic' debate about *largesse* had infiltrated the consciousness of the noble classes. Chrétien himself had connections with the twelfth-century courts of Champagne and Flanders: in *Erec et Enide* (written c.1170), he connected himself with Troyes in northern France, when he named himself 'Chrestiens de Troies'; he wrote *Le Chevalier de la*

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[36] A.Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance* (Oxford, 1995), p.153.
[37] Gerald of Wales, 'De principis instructione liber', dist.1, pp.28-9, my emphases.

Charrete (c.1177) at the command of Marie of Champagne (1145-98),[38] wife of Henry the Liberal, who herself encouraged scholarship and endowed the collegiate house of Notre-Dame-du Val in Provins; and he dedicated *Le Conte du Graal* (c.1182) to Count Philip of Flanders.[39]

Chrétien's works contain examples of extreme lavishness which may be considered typical of romances; but in the *Conte du Graal*, he makes a clear moral distinction between two 'types' of *largesse*: that exemplified by Alexander the Great, and that of his patron Count Philip of Flanders.[40] The distinction made by Chrétien is a moral one: the count gives 'selonc l'Evangile, sanz ypocrisye et sanz guile' ('without hypocrisy or deceit, in accord with the Gospel injunction', ll.29-30).[41] Philip of Flanders gives freely from a virtuous heart ('franc cuer le debonere'), and his gifts are set against those given by Alexander, out of vainglory ('la vainne gloire').[42] Philip gives with his right hand, as opposed to left-handed giving which was a symbol of vice.[43] Philip is praised by Chrétien de Troyes accordingly, as someone who is worth writing for:

> Qui petit seme petit quialt,
> Et qui auques recoillir vialt,
> An tel leu sa semance espande

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[38] *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, ll.1-30.
[39] *Conte du Graal*, ll.1-20.
[40] For further discussion of Chrétien's use of Alexander, see C.Luttrell, 'The Prologue of Crestien's *Li Contes del Graal*', *Arthurian Literature*, 3 (1983), pp.1-25; Sargent-Baur, 'Alexander', pp.1-18.
[41] Kibler, p.381.
[42] ll.55, 40; Kibler, p.381.
[43] John of Salisbury also employed this image in a letter (1160-1) written to Bartholomew, archdeacon of Exeter (possibly Master Bartholomew, archdeacon and later bishop of Exeter): 'Aliorum tristitia in eorum gaudium cedit, 'in quorum manibus iniquitates sunt, et sinistra eorum aut repleta est muneribus' aut eis inhiat; haec enim hominum monstra dextras non habent' ('For the misery of others brings joy to those 'in whose hands is wickedness and whose left hand is full of gifts' [cf John, xvi.20] or open to clutch them; for these human monsters have no right hands': *Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. Millor and Brooke, I (London, 1955), pp.193-4.

Que fruit a cent dobles li rande,
Car an terre qui rien ne vaut
Bone semance i seche et faut.
Crestïens seme et fet semance
d'un romans que il ancomance,
et si le seme an si bon leu
qu'il ne puet estre sanz grant preu,
qu'il le fet por le plus prodome
qui soit an l'empire de Rome:
c'est li cuens Phelipes de Flandres,
qui mialx valt ne fist Alixandres,
cil que l'an dit qui tant fu buens. (ll.1-15)

> He who sows sparingly, reaps sparingly, but he who wishes to reap plentifully casts his seed on ground that will bear him fruit a hundredfold; for good seed withers and dies in worthless soil. Chrétien sows and casts the seed of a romance that he is beginning, and sows it in such a good place that it cannot fail to be bountiful, since he does it for the most worthy man in all the empire of Rome: that is, Count Philip of Flanders, who surpasses Alexander, whom they say was so great.[44]

Such praise might be expected from a poet to his patron, but beyond this it is reasonable to suggest that Chrétien de Troyes is engaging with a thriving contemporary debate.

Indeed, the virtue of *largesse* is a predominant theme in the chivalric romances of Chrétien de Troyes. In his romance of *Cligés* (written c.1171), the emperor explains to his son the importance of *largesse*, in a passage which is worth quoting here at length.

> Largesce est dame et reïne
> Qui totes vertuz anlumine,
> Ne n'est mie grief a prover.

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[44] Kibler, p.381. The German poet Walther von der Vogelweide (c.1170-1230) uses the image of the seed to illustrate the profitable qualities of *largesse*, in *Der zweite Philippston* (c.1207-8): 'The reward of *largesse* is like the seed that gives a wonderful return according to how it is sown. Sow away generously. Any king who gives to *Largesse* She will give him things he never had before. How intelligent Alexander was: He gave and gave, and she gave him all the kingdoms of the earth': Walther von der Vogelweide, *Lieder*, ed. F.Maurer, vol.1, *Die politischen Lieder Walthers von der Vogelweide* (Tübingen, 1964), p.51.

En quel lieu porroit l'an trover
Home tant soit sage ne riches
Ne soit blasmé se il est chiches?
Qui a itant de bien sanz grace
Que Largesce loer ne face?
Par soi fet prodome Largesce. (ll.193-201)

Largesse is the mistress and queen that gives lustre to every virtue, as is not hard to prove. Where could one find a man, however powerful and rich, who would not be blamed if he were mean? And who is the person that Largesse does not cause to be praised, though he is not appreciated for his many other qualities? Largesse on its own makes a worthy man.[45]

The stature of *Largesse* is given emphasis by means of its personification as a queen, and its positive virtues are accentuated in the contrast with pejoratives. The man who is *riches* (rich) cannot afford to be *chiches* (mean); indeed, it is morally wrong for him to be so. Significantly, this rhyming couplet occurs several times in other romances by Chrétien.[46] In *Erec et Enide*, it is used to similar effect more than once, with the opposition '*riches/chiches*' serving to emphasise Arthur's extreme generosity at Erec's wedding. Arthur, Chrétien stresses, was not mean:

N'i ot guichet ne porte close:
Les issües et les antrees
Furent le jor abandonees,
N'an fu tornez povres ne riches.
Li rois Artus ne fu pas chiches:
Bien comanda as penetiers
Et as queuz et aus botelliers
Qu'il livrassent a grant planté,

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[45] Kibler, p.95. While editors do not usually capitalise *largesse*, the translation is modified here to reflect its function as a personification.

[46] Other instances of this opposition are listed below. In *Erec et Enide* the evil Count attempts, without success, to console the newly 'widowed' Enide, by appealing to the wealth and position she stands to enjoy on marrying him. Fortune, he says, has not been mean: 'Vos est granz richese aoverte:/ Povre estïez, or estes *riche*. /N'est pas Fortune vers vos *chiche*/ Qui tel enor vos a donee/ C'or seroiz contesse clamee' (ll.4801-3); see also ll.6667-8. In *Cligés*, Fenice's love-lament emphasises the moral element of the opposition: *Cligés*, ll.4513-46.

Chascun selonc sa volanté,
Et pain et vin et veneison. (ll.2002-11)

No wicket or door was closed: the entrances and exits were all wide open that day; neither poor man nor rich man was turned away. King Arthur was not parsimonious; he ordered the bakers, cooks, and wine-stewards to serve bread, wine and game in great quantity to each person - as much as he wished.[47]

Arthur's *largesse* at Erec's coronation is also described using the same contrasting terms. Following a description of Arthur's provisions to the newly dubbed knights, Chrétien states that his generosity is greater than that of Alexander. In this romance Alexander is still a symbol of *largesse*; even so, he looks 'chiche' in comparison with Arthur:

Alixandres, qui tant conquist
que desoz lui tot le mont mist,
et tant fu larges et tant riches,
fu anvers lui povres et chiches. (ll.6611-14)

Alexander, who conquered so much that he subdued the whole world and was so generous and rich, was poor and miserly compared to him.[48]

Yet despite this outright praise of generous giving, in the prologue to the *Conte du Graal* we find 'a man, who is both powerful and rich', yet whose generosity is evidently not winning him any praise: Alexander. Here the ideal of liberality is complicated by the focus on the motives behind it. The sin of avarice is once again a chief concern, and Chrétien's complaint is essentially the same as Seneca's: that Alexander turns generosity into vainglory.

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[47] Kibler, p.62.
[48] Kibler, p.119.

Chrétien launches an attack on Alexander the 'so-called' Great ('Cil que l'an dit qui tant fu buens', l.15) which leaves us in no doubt that liberality is not, in this case, enough on its own: 'Car il ot an lui amassez/ Toz les vices et toz les max/ Dont li cuens est mondes et sax' (for he had amassed within himself all the vices and wickedness of which the count is pure and exempt).[49] The condemnatory tone of the prologue is striking, and more notably so because of Chrétien's use of the figure of Alexander in the earlier *Erec et Enide*, where the reference is intended to enhance Erec's name through its association with Alexander:[50]

> Or fu Erec de tel renon
> Qu'an ne parloit se de lui non:
> Nus hom n'avoit si boene grace
> Qu'il sanbloit Ausalon de face
> Et de la lengue Salemon,
> Et de fierté sanbla lyon,
> Et de doner et de despandre
> Refu il parauz Alixandre. (ll.2223-30)
>
> Now such was Erec's renown that people talked of no one else; no man had such exceptional qualities, for he had the face of Absalom and resembled Solomon in his speech. For ferocity he was like a lion, and in giving and spending he was like Alexander.[51]

Even in the description of Erec's coronation cited above, the reference to Alexander's *largesse* is only intended to highlight the sense of Arthur's extreme generosity. Yet here in the *Conte du Graal*, Alexander's motives suffer in comparison with Philip's. In contrast to the 'bon cuens' Philip's virtuous heart,

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[49] ll.18-20; Kibler, p.381.
[50] This point is also noted by Sargent-Baur, 'Alexander', pp.7-8.
[51] Kibler, p.65.

'Alixandre ne chalut/ De charité ne de nul bien' (Alexander ... cared not for charity or any good deeds, ll.58-9). Here *largesse* is portrayed as a spiritual virtue as well as something which keeps figures such as Chrétien financially supported.

Chrétien's apparent change of heart has received much attention from scholars, and a variety of explanations have been offered.[52] Opinion varies as to the particular significance of the use of the figure of Alexander in the comparison, and the relevance of the religious tone of the narrative. For example, Claude Luttrell's study begins with a comparison of this passage with the parable of the sower in St Matthew's Gospel. He also suggests that the preparations for the imminent Third Crusade, involving Philip of Flanders, may account for the increased religiosity of this romance.[53] The court for which the *Conte du Graal* was written would have been receptive to crusading ideals.[54] Like Luttrell, Sargent-Baur considers the importance of *charité* as a theme, suggesting an increased religiosity on the part of the author. She also discusses the possible influence of Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* on Chrétien de Troyes,[55] suggesting that rivalries existed between the two authors, and that Chrétien was not enamoured by the secular generosity displayed by Walter's hero.

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[52] Sargent-Baur, 'Alexander'; Hunt, 'The Prologue to Chrestien's *Li Contes del Graal*'; Luttrell, 'The Prologue of Crestien's *Li Contes del Graal*'.
[53] C.Luttrell, *The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance: A Quest* (London, 1974), p.27-32.
[54] Diverres explores in detail the parallels between the *Conte du Graal* and contemporary politics in Jerusalem: 'The Grail and the Third Crusade: Thoughts on *Le Conte du Graal*', *Arthurian Literature*, 10 (1990), pp.13-109.
[55] Sargent-Baur, 'Alexander', pp.13-18.

Yet Hunt has a point when, in arguing against a link between the prologue and the tale, he states that the Chrétien's choice of Alexander would have been a natural one, due to influence of Ciceronian morality on ideas about liberality, and the profusion of references in medieval texts to Alexander as a figure of liberality, together with Philip of Flanders's own widespread reputation for *largesse*.[56] Hunt argues that Chrétien's prologue is, above all, a eulogy. He chooses to highlight the issue of patronage, interpreting Chrétien's 'harvest' as an earthly one. Philip of Flanders provides the necessary fertile ground, and Chrétien is acknowledging this fact.

As Chrétien's patron, Philip of Flanders is the obvious target for flattering accounts of sublime *largesse*: these were no doubt intended to encourage further generosity to the author. Patronage is certainly an important factor, and it highlights the social context of these works within the court circles at Champagne and Flanders; and in his romances Chrétien himself demonstrates a distinctive awareness of issues of money and payment, as we will see later. Yet patronage and religious crusading zeal do not necessitate this particularly derogatory portrayal of Alexander, who was previously in Chrétien de Troyes such a shining example of *largesse*. The key factor to note is that the negative representation of Alexander shares many similarities with those classical and contemporary descriptions in which Alexander appears as an example of bad

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[56] Hunt, 'The Prologue to Chrestien's *Li Contes del Graal*', pp.373-4, 379. In a later essay, Hunt takes on board scholarly criticism of his essay and 'accepts many of the strictures of Luttrell': 'Chrétien's Prologues Reconsidered', *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honour of Douglas Kelly*. ed. K.Busby and N.J.Lacy (Amsterdam, 1944), pp.153-68 (154).

largesse. The wisdom of modesty in giving, emphasised in Seneca's account, is endorsed in Chrétien's prologue. Just as the knight of Arthurian romance relies on others to spread his reputation, modesty being a key virtue in romance,[57] so, says Chrétien, a gift should be given from the heart. Chrétien de Troyes is thus tapping into debates drawn from the classical repertoire, and his passage in the *Conte du Graal* illustrates key elements of a wider discussion of the problem which took place in aristocratic circles in the later twelfth century, and which was vigorous and influential.

Alexander featured as a popular exemplary figure in twelfth-century discussion of *largesse.* Representations of his liberality, positive and negative, were common, setting up models of behaviour, and playing an important part in the expression and development of medieval thought about *largesse*. The producers of these texts and their intended audiences had an interest in the subject which was far more than academic, and ideas about *largesse* crossed the boundaries of layman and cleric, reaching those famous figures who represented *largesse* to the twelfth-century nobility, those who were actually involved in its practice, including Philip of Flanders and Henry the Liberal. It is indeed possible that Henry owed his epithet 'the Liberal' to the dedicatee of Seneca's *De beneficiis*, Aebutius Liberalis. Through the circulation of these works among members of the nobility, theories of *largesse* were crossing the boundaries

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[57] Note Cligés' embarrassment when being praised by his fellows: 'Cligés ne set qu'il lor responde... /Mes bel li est, si en a honte: /Li sans an la face li monte, /Si que tot vergoignier le voient' (ll.5000-5005); 'Cligés did not know what to reply ... but it pleased and embarrassed him; the blood rose to his face, and they could see his embarrassment': Kibler, p.184.

between cleric and layman, as indeed were the gifts themselves. It is now time, therefore, to examine these theories about *largesse* at work in an analysis of acts of giving.

3.ii (a) Largesse on Display : Public Reputations

We have seen that *largesse* was a highly charged issue. In its status as one of the most significant chivalric virtues, *largesse* involved a network of social expectations. Interestingly, Marian Whitney uses the term 'duty' to describe the dispensing, as gifts, of those horses and arms which, previous to the twelfth century, would have been given as rewards.[58] In the twelfth century *largesse* had become a 'noble gesture',[59] and one which exemplified a whole code of behaviour.

Altruism and modesty are important ideals, but if *largesse* was an obligatory virtue, then it was important to be seen to be giving. So, the question arises: what was the relation of visible acts of lavish generosity to prestige and reputation? Issues of power and social status are explored now as we examine *largesse* as a public phenomenon, beginning with some examples of lavish giving in romances, and moving on to acts of *largesse* by the nobles of Champagne and Flanders as represented in charters and chronicles. Exploring public acts of giving will help to establish the value of *largesse* as a way of playing out political agendas, and will also test modern assumptions about the idealism of chivalric romances.

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[58] Whitney, 'Queen of Medieval Virtues', p.186.
[59] Starobinski, *Largesse*, p.23.

Romance works leave no doubt as to the importance of the quality of *largesse*: as Enide laments of her 'dead' husband, 'Largesce t'avoit coroné/ Cele sanz cui nus n'a grant pris' (*Largesse* - she without whom no one has great renown - had crowned you).[60] In *Cligés* we have seen Alexander exerting himself to follow the emperor's advice about generosity, and gaining favour thereby:[61]

Alixandres ot grant avoir
De Costantinoble aporté;
A ce que li ot comandé
Li emperere et conseillié
Que son cüer eust esveillié
A bien doner et a despandre
Voldra sor tote rien antendre.
Tant s'est Alixandres penez
Et tant fet par son bel servise
Que molt l'ainme li rois et prise,
Et li baron et la reïne. (ll.400-419)

> Alexander had brought great wealth from Constantinople, being anxious above all to heed the emperor's entreaties and advice to have his heart set on generous giving and spending. Alexander has made such great efforts and performed so well his service that he gains the great love and esteem of the king as well as of the nobles and the queen.[62]

The young man journeys to foreign lands, laden with money and goods to distribute. To be accompanied by such riches is clearly an expected practice, and many other romance heroes journey out in a similar fashion.[63] Significantly,

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[60] *Erec et Enide,* ll.4642-3; Kibler, p.94.
[61] See Chapter One. In Jean Renart's *Le lai de l'Ombre* (c.1217-22), which was probably dedicated to the bishop of Beauvais, the hero is praised for his free-handed apportioning of gifts: F.Lecoy (ed.), *Le Lai de l'Ombre*, CFMA (Paris, 1979), ll.66-8, 72-3; P.Matarasso (trans.), 'The Lay of the Reflection', in *Aucassin and Nicolette and Other Tales* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.65.
[62] Kibler, p.98.
[63] In the story of Caradoc, which appears in the *First Continuation* of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, the young Caradoc leaves for Arthur's court with plenty of provisions: 'De son seignor son congié prant/ Et maintenant son erre anprant./ Assez am porte or et argent,/ Si moine mestre et

though, it is the young Alexander's display of *largesse* which wins him a place in society. Here we see the use of *largesse* in its potential for providing future benefits.

First the display of wealth has psychological power. *Largesse*, through the employment of symbolic physical objects and adornments, functions as a statement of wealth, power and position. Public occasions such as weddings or coronations are accompanied by the mass distribution of gifts, as in this example from the story of *Caradoc* from the *First Continuation*:

> Et quant la cort vint au partir,
> Et qui les veïst departir
> Or et argent, chevaux, oisiaux,
> De si riches et de si biaux,
> Nuns ne vint si povres a cort
> Ne soit riches ainz qu'il s'an tort. (ll.7417-22)
>
> When the court broke up, many presents of great value and inestimable beauty were given out: gold, silver, horses, and birds. No matter how poor they were, everyone who came to that court went home rich.[64]

This public display of wealth is linked to strategies of lordship. The good lord will give abundantly to his followers: in *Caradoc* when Gawain asks King Arthur to 'grant us a gift: tell us why you are so pensive', Arthur replies that he wants to 'hold the noblest court from here to Constantinople':

> Par tot le mont renonmee,
> Que parole ne soit parlee
> De cort que onques mes tenisse,
> Ne de nul don que je feïsse,
> Avers que ferai de ceste ore.

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belle gent/ Et gentix homes et vallez': ll.6823-7; 'He took his leave of his lord and set out on his way at once, taking plenty of gold and silver, and bringing his master and a fine company of noble men and lads with him': Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.7.

[64] Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances,* p.15.

> so renowned throughout the entire world that there will be no talk of any court that I have ever held nor of any gift I have made, in comparison with the court I will hold now.[65]

To this Gawain replies that such a thought is worthy not of a mean man, but only of a valiant king; again the phrases 'riches' and 'chiches' are juxtaposed.[66] Arthur is conforming to that which is admired in a good leader, and pleases his knights in doing so. Likewise, in *L'Atre Périlleux* expenditure is again shown to be the action of a noble and prudent leader:

> A tant commença li servises,
> Moult grans et moult biax et moult rices,
> Car li rois Artus n'ert pas nices,
> Que voloit qu'il fust moult pleniers. (ll.126-9)
>
> Then the food was served, with many beautiful rich dishes, for King Arthur was no fool and wanted everything to be perfect.[67]

This lavish giving is more than acceptable: it is expected, and it is also an investment. As Jane Merino points out, in her discussion of the coronation scene in *Erec et Enide*, we witness here not free generosity, but the necessary actions of a leader who will in fact be judged by that which he gives.[68] In the words of the twelfth-century chanson de geste *Doon de Maience*, you should be generous to everyone, for the more you give, the more honour you will have, and the richer you will become: 'soiez largez à tous; car, tant plus tu donras/ plus acquarras d'onneur et plus riche seras'.[69]

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[65] *Continuations,* ed. Roach, ll.7013-17; Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.9.
[66] *Continuations*, ed. Roach, ll.7021-24; Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.10.
[67] Arthur, *Three Arthurian Romances*, pp.110-111.
[68] Merino, 'The Gift', p.8; *Erec et Enide*, ll.6650 ff.
[69] *Doon de Maience: Chanson de Geste*, ed. M. A. Pey, Les Anciens Poetes de la France (Paris, 1966), ll.2436-7. German texts of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries reflect similar sentiments about the importance of giving. Walther von der Vogelweide again provides several interesting

The importance of having a reputation for *largesse* was certainly recognised by noble leaders at the courts of northern France. We have seen that Count Philip and Count Henry had connections with many of the twelfth-century writers on liberality. We have also considered Chrétien de Troyes's emphasis on the open-handed character of Philip of Flanders in the prologue to the *Conte du Graal.* The reputations of Philip of Flanders and Count Henry the Liberal of Champagne for *largesse* were important in their position as key political, social and military leaders who functioned at the centre of the chivalrous courts of the twelfth century. Let us consider some of these reputations in more detail.

The father of Henry the Liberal, Count Thibaut II of Blois-Champagne (1103-52), set a precedent for *largesse.* Thibaut is known to have been a supporter and friend of St Bernard,[70] who recommended his son Henry in a letter written to the Byzantine emperor in 1147.[71] Saint Bernard's confidence in

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examples. In *Der erste Philippston*, (c.1202-3), King Philip of Swabia is warned that he has failed to be generous enough, and that he will suffer thereby. He is compared unfavourably with another great leader, the rival Richard I: 'King Philip, those who are perceptive accuse you of not being generous [milte] of your own free will: for this reason, I think, you lose far much more. You'd do better to give a thousand pounds willingly that 30,000 unwillingly. You do not [seem to] know how one gains worth and honour [ere] through giving. Think of the generous Saladin: he said that a king's hands should be like a sieve. Thus they would be feared and loved. Think of the king of England [Richard I], how he was at great cost redeemed by his giving hands. One loss is good if it achieves two gains': Walther von der Vogelweide, *Lieder*, pp.24-5. Walther also places the rivals Otto IV of Brunswick and Frederick II of Hohenstaufen against each other, playing them off in terms of their *largesse* in *Der König Friedrichston* (1228): *Lieder*, p.93. I am grateful to Bill McCann for referring me to these texts.

[70] The letters of St Bernard verify a continued correspondence: B.S.James (trans.), *The Letters of St.Bernard of Clairvaux* (London, 1953), letters 39-44. Evergates states that Suger was also 'impressed' by the count's generosity, suggesting that it was his counsel which led to the appointment of Thibaut and Ralph as guardians of the young Louis: 'Louis VII and the Counts of Champagne', *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. M.Gervers (New York, 1992), pp.109-117 (109). In one letter, Bernard asked Thibaut to extend his liberality to an unknown man, on his recommmendation alone: 'I can briefly and truthfully say that whatever it may please you of your liberality to confer on him as a true servant of Christ, you may be sure you have conferred on Christ himself': James (trans.), *Letters*, no.46.

[71] Evergates, *Documents*, pp.103-5.

Thibaut's *largesse* is reflected in a comment which he makes in a letter which pleads for the pardoning of a man:

> Si aurum, si argentum vel quodcumque huiusmodi quaesissem, forte recuperassem.
>
> If I had asked for gold or silver or anything of that sort, I know you well enough to be sure that I should have received it.[72]

In a letter written to Count Henry, Philip of Harvengt, abbot of a Premonstratensian house in Brabant, also praised the qualities of Henry's father.[73] The letter before this in the collection is significantly addressed to Philip, Count of Flanders. The abbot warns Philip to use his knowledge of letters as a mirror by which to improve himself, and to help him to avoid that wretched vice of 'avarice',[74] and notably encourages Count Philip to turn away from Alexander and tyranny. Thus *largesse* was an important part of aristocratic reputations, and the ills represented by Alexander were presented to the counts as anti-models.

Thibaut's son Henry upheld the standard of *largesse* set by his father, and complimentary representations of Henry the Liberal invite comparison with the heroes of Chrétien's romances. In his *Bible* (c.1206), the poet Guiot de

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[72] Saint Bernard, 'Epistolae', letter 37, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, VII, ed. J.Leclercq and H.Rochais (Rome, 1974), pp.94-5; James (trans.), *Letters*, pp.71-2 (71).

[73] 'Porro tuus ille pater quem mira in pauperes liberalitas insignivit, cujus non animum avaritia, non manum tenacitas irretivit: te, quem suum haeredem disponebat, honesta scientia praemunivit, dum provida sollicitudine studiis a puero liberalibus crudivit': Philip of Harvengt, 'Epistolae', letter 17, PL 203, 152. Philip of Harvengt also praised the virtues of Count Charles 'the Good' of Flanders: 'Epistolae', letter 16, PL 203. All of the thirty-four surviving charters of Charles the Good show him making a donation to, or intervening in cases of conflict with, churches: Nicholas, *Medieval Flanders*, p.61, n.15; F.Vercauteren (ed.), *Actes des comtes de Flandre, 1071-1128* (Brussels, 1928), 209-92.

[74] Philip of Harvengt, 'Epistolae', letter 16, PL 203, 148.

Provins includes a list of great lords, among whom features the generous Henry: 'Et li quiens Hanris de Champagne!/ fut li plus larges hom do mont.'[75] Another good piece of evidence is supplied by Peter Riga, who came from Reims and studied at Paris, and celebrated in a poem the birth of Count Henry's nephew in 1165. At the end of this work Peter mentions the giving of gifts at the event, and refers to a 'count Henry' in the following laudatory terms:

> Queres Henrici comitis que dona colorent?
> Gaudia plus aliis illa nitere nota.
> Cum probet hunc fama pro parvo magna daturum,
> Jam are pro magnis maxima constat eum.
> Pretereo comitis predicti nobile munus,
> Nam sua consuerit nil nisi dona manus;
> Dantem sepe semel danti conscribere noli;
> Cuilibet egregius eminet iste gregi.
> Nullo dante dedit, dat vel dabit hic comes; ergo
> Conscribam donis publica vota suis,
> Donum dona suum quamvis precedit. In usum
> Tam dare deventi, no dare crimen erit.
> Dat dare qui nescit, deponit avarus avarum;
> Illum qui dederit non cito, crede reum.[76]

Henry's reputation for *largesse* was thus secured among his contemporaries.

Walter Map provides another account of Henry's *largesse.* He had occasion to experience Count Henry's hospitality first-hand when he attended the Third Lateran Council in 1179:

> Suscepit me hospicio comes Campanie, Henricus filius Teobaldi, omnium largissimus, ita ut multis prodigus videretur.
>
> The count of Champagne, Henry, the son of Thibaut, took me in - the most liberal of men, so much so that to many he seemed prodigal.[77]

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[75] Guiot de Provins, *Bible*, ed. Orr, ll.324-5.
[76] H.F.Delaborde (ed.), 'Un poème de Pierre Riga', *Notices de documents publiés pour la société de l'histoire du France* (Paris, 1884), pp.121-7 (ll.67-80).
[77] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, v.5, pp.450-53.

Interestingly Henry conversed on the very subject of liberality. Henry's criticisms of excessive liberality are most revealing:

> Inter colloquendum laudabat Reginaldum de Muzun, nepotem suum, in omnibus excepto quod supra modum largus erat. Ego vero sciens ipsum comitem tam largum et prodigus videretur, subridens quesiui si sciret ipse terminos largitatis. Respondit, 'Ubi deficit quod dari potest, ibi terminus est; non est enim largitatis turpiter querere quod dari possit.'
>
> In conversation he was praising his nephews, Reginald de Mouzon, in every point except that he was over-lavish. I, however, who knew that the count was so liberal as to be thought prodigal, smiled, and asked if he himself knew the limits of liberality. He replied: 'Where there remains no more to be given, there is the limit; for it is not liberality to procure by base means what you can give away.'

Walter upholds the count's words, adding that one would by these means become miserly in order to be generous ('auarus es ut sis largus'). So Henry appears to understand the limits of *largesse* and to have taken on board those ideologies about measure in giving which were supported by contemporaries, including Walter Map's friend Gerald of Wales.

Henry the Liberal is also known to have made several large donations to Nicholas of Clairvaux, including the income from a house at Troyes in 1160. Nicholas, who was a monk of the Benedictine monastery of Montiéramey, ten miles from Troyes, was for a time secretary to Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, and dedicated two of his collections to Henry, coming afterwards to work in service of the count. Clearly both stood to benefit from their exchanges.[78]

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[78] H.d'Arbois de Jubainville (ed.), 'Recueil des chartes d'Henri le Libéral', *Tresór des pièces rares et curieuses de la Champagne et de la Brie*, I, ed. J.Carnandet (Chaumont, 1863), 282-3. For discussion of other writers patronised by the count, including Simon Chèvre d'Or, and Guiot

So reputations for *largesse* were as widespread in the case of the counts of Champagne and Flanders as they were for the heroic knights of romance. Notably the accounts of the generosity of the northern French counts were often written by those who had direct connections with them, and a personal interest in eliciting their generosity. We see again the infiltration into the noble consciousness of ideas about *largesse*, and how both parties benefited materially from a reputation for *largesse*. Visible acts of *largesse* had distinct social and political advantages for the aristocracy of northern France as a way of publicly demonstrating power and wealth, and of forging bonds of obligation. Equally, the importance of discernment was also appreciated. Indeed, there was another side to Count Henry's reasoning about *largesse*: as we shall see, his views on giving were not limited just by his means, but were in fact much more politically discerning. We must now investigate more closely the idea that one amasses benefits through acts of *largesse*, by exploring accounts of pious giving by nobles, and asserting areas of similarity or disparity between secular and religious accounts of *largesse*.

3.ii (b) Treasures in Heaven: Pious Donations

The pious gift is a particularly interesting manifestation of our theme as it allows us to explore further the importance of an awareness of the obligation created by *largesse*, and how far expectations of return influenced acts of giving.

(the scribe of Chrétien de Troyes's works), see Benton, 'The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center', pp.3-43; Putter highlights an additional figure, 'Bertrans', from Bar-sur-Aube: 'Knights and Clerics', pp.253-4.

The purpose of this section is to explore how far even a gift presented to a monastery was perceived as part of an *exchange*, whether vertical (involving God) or horizontal (between men), and how far an expectation of reciprocal benefit accompanied such gifts. Donations to monasteries and other ecclesiastical communities were one of the major means by which wealth was transferred in the twelfth century.[79] The motivations for giving were, at least partly, prompted by an awareness of the resulting spiritual benefits. Spiritual matters played a significant part in the lives of nobles;[80] and interactions between monasteries and the surrounding community were a matter of course. A comparison of secular accounts of giving with pious acts of giving will help to establish further how far ideologies of *largesse* were informed by personal agendas, and will increase our understanding of the value of the chivalric ideal of *largesse* to the aristocracy of northern France.

We have seen how social prestige was maintained through gift-giving, an exchange which serves to create and reinforce social ties. Social relationships were similarly affected in the case of pious gifts, and the comparative influence of spiritual, political and economic factors has previously been assessed by scholars.[81] In exploring attitudes to pious gifts, a good analytical approach is to

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[79] 'The normative type of formal contact between the arms-bearing laity and religious communities was the grant - usually by gift ... typically but not invariably land or appurtenant rights': M.G.Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c.970-c.1130* (Oxford, 1993), p.157. See also J.Avril, 'Observance monastique et spiritualité dans les préambules des actes (X^{e}-XIII^{e} siècle)', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 85 (1990), pp.5-29.

[80] Evergates, *Documents*, p.135.

[81] Bouchard, *Sword, Miter and Cloister*; Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property*; White, *Custom, Kinship and Gifts*; McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints.*

test religious ideals about *largesse* against the political and economic considerations of monks and laymen, and explore further the interaction of clerical and lay ideas about the nature and meaning of *largesse*.

The charters of religious establishments are a good body of material with which to begin the investigation, for they reveal much about attitudes to gifts. Although they are formulaic in style, the stipulated obligations surrounding the gift, including the sense of an expected return, come across clearly. It seems reasonable that a tone of religiosity should accompany accounts of pious donations; one's spiritual fate may be expected to be one of the most important considerations in making a gift to a religious house. A gift of land acted as a bond between donor and saint, via the monks of an establishment.[82] Yet in the donation charters, the language employed frequently calls upon notions of remuneration. The evidence suggests that even in the case of pious donations, a gift did not come without its obligations and counter-gifts.

In his stoical appraisal of beneficence, Seneca asserted that 'turpis feneratio est beneficium expensum ferre' (To regard a benefit as an amount advanced is putting it out at shameful interest, *De ben.* I.ii.3-4). Monks and clerics were, however, responsible for enhancing the nobles' awareness of their mortal plight in order to encourage the flow of these gifts. It is therefore not surprising that establishments were sometimes accused of buying and selling privileges, particularly when the use of counter-gifts was very common.[83] So, it

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[82] Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor*, p.4.
[83] For a discussion of confusion arising as a result of the counter-gift, see Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property*, p.28.

is important to ask: how far does the language of exchange enter into these documents, and in what contexts?

Many charters set out the virtues of giving and the resulting benefits which may be reaped: such notions often follow closely the lessons from the Bible, common examples of which are given below:

> And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that ... they may receive you into everlasting habitations.
>
> (Luke 16:9)

> Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.
>
> (Matthew 6:19)

> Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.
>
> (Matthew 19:21)

'Treasures in heaven' is a refrain which recurs in texts from our period, and the link between earthly giving and spiritual counter-gain is often made in these terms. The idea of heavenly reward can be found in eleventh-century charters which detail gifts and protection given to churches by the counts of Flanders. For example, one late eleventh-century charter expresses Count Robert II's hope of becoming a 'co-heir', and sharing in heavenly reward:

> Ego Rodbertus, Dei misericordia Flandrensium marchio, comitis Rodberti agnomine Fresonis filius, Dei primum gratia preventus, majorumque exemplo meorum et sancte matris nostre ecclesie doctorum salubri ammonitione instructus, ut beatissimi apostoli nos ad celestia invitantis: "Fratres non habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus quia heredes sumus quidem

> Dei, coheredes autem Christi",[84] statui sanum michi consilium quatinus Christum michi facerem heredem, qui nos perditos suo sanguine redimendo sibi coheredes fecit superne vocationis et participes sue remunerationis.[85]

Heavenly remuneration is not necessarily expected outright, and the vocabulary often remains tentative. A charter from Bruges, in January 1093, begins with a discussion of the fragility of human nature, brought on through disobedience; it too goes on to talk of the possibility of laying up treasures in heaven:

> pro eo quod vendit que habet et dat elemosinam et facit sacculos qui non veterascunt, thesaurum non deficientem in celis, ante omnes alias ecclesias in terra jurisdictionis mee a me adhuc pusillo et puero magnis desideriorum votis hujus securitatis et quietis munitionem anhelavit impetrare.[86]

Similarly, in a Lille charter, dated to September or October 1096, the count expresses his hope of acquiring remuneration for his protection and support of the church, which is expressed in terms of his being 'deserving': 'a Domino remunerationem *mererer* accipere'.[87]

Notwithstanding this, the conditions of the donation are also set out: in the first charter mentioned here, it is made clear that the gift is revocable; and the count also retains the right to oversee the election of the provost, thereby creating the conditions for the appointment of favourites to ecclesiastical positions. Even when given for the benefit of the soul ('pro anima mea'), the

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[84] *Romans* 18:17.
[85] Vercauteren (ed.), *Actes*, pp.29-30.
[86] Vercauteren (ed.), *Actes*, pp.38-40 (39-40).
[87] Vercauteren (ed.), *Actes*, p.63.

conditions accompanying the gifts, and confirmations of the rights of both the giver and the monastery, mean that a secular 'economic' element remains.

Thus the dispositive clauses of these early charters clearly reveal the place of the pious gift in the context of exchange, both in the religious context in the reward from heaven, and in a political context, where the gifts serve to set up horizontal counter-agreements. They reflect a sense of ideas about the function of pious gifts which involve relationships of obligation and return.

Are these ideas of 'proper return' supported by other evidence? The image of heavenly reward was taken up in the following letter written by St Bernard to a friend, Mar, and his wife, extolling the virtues of generosity:

> Quidquid super terram possidetis, certum est vos quandoque amittere, nisi quod in caelum per manus pauperum curaveritis praemittere. Eia, carissimi, thesaurizate vobis thesauros in caelo, ubi tinea non demoliatur, ubi fures non effodiant nec furentur, ubi denique dux ipse nihil vobis possit auferre.
>
> It is very certain that sooner or later you will lose whatever possessions you have, unless you send them on ahead to heaven by the hands of the poor. Come, dearest friends, lay up treasures in heaven where moth cannot corrupt, where thieves will not break in and steal, and where the leader himself cannot take anything from you.[88]

Once again, then, despite the guise of charity, the promise of a return is used to promote acts of *largesse*, and gift-giving is something which has to be encouraged. Indeed, in another of Bernard's letters, written to encourage the taking of the cross, he appealed to the sense of future gains, addressing all those who were 'prudent merchants' to join the campaign, and highlighting the fact

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[88] Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Epistolae', ed. Leclercq and Rochais, vol.8, letter 421, p.405; James (trans.), *Letters*, p.514.

that they would receive remission of their sins.[89] Bernard employed the sense of heavenly reward in such a way that, as Bouchard puts it, he made it sound like an 'investment plan'.[90] Thus the religious cause promises to 'return the favour' in the future; even on the spiritual plane, a language of measurable exchange is evident.

In fact, the cultural values of the receivers of gifts began to cause some degree of concern,[91] and it is important to consider points at which the values of the giver and recipient appear to match. The *pauperes* to whom nobles were encouraged to give were of course principally represented by monks, and the involvement of monks in promoting gifts became the subject of anxiety. For example, Abelard registered his concern that the idea of 'treasure' was beginning to take on too much of an economic and worldly value, especially in relation to the gifts given on entry to monastic life.[92] He accused monks of focusing too much on the bringing of gifts, and not enough on the people who brought them. In the following sermon, he cites the same passage used in the charters, but he tries to emphasise what he believes should be the proper priorities:

> 'Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende omnia que habes, et da pauperibus et veni et sequere me.' Non utique dicit: Veni, et affer quae habes ad nos, sed aliiis prius eroga tua, et sic post modum, suscipe nostra. Nos vero e contrario quemlibet ad conversionem

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[89] 'But to those of you who are merchants, men quick to seek a bargain, let me point out the advantages of this great opportunity. Do not miss them. Take up the sign of the Cross and you will find indulgence for all the sins which you humbly confess. The cost is small, the reward is great': James (trans.), *Letters*, no.391.

[90] Bouchard, *Sword, Miter and Cloister*, p.228.

[91] Often in charters, the larger the gift, the great number of pious quotations which accompanied it: see Bouchard, *Sword, Miter and Cloister*, p.226.

[92] For discussion of the battles against simony and 'turpe lucrum' (filthy gain) by eleventh- and twelfth-century reformers, see J.H.Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry into Religious Life from 1000 to 1260: A Social, Economic and Legal Study* (Columbus, 1976), pp.70-5.

venientem, non tam lucrum animae quam pecuniae quaerentes, ut quae habet afferat exhortamur, nec tam ei nostra largimus quam vendimus.

'If you wish to be perfect, sell all that you have, and give to the poor and come follow me.' He did not say: Come and bring what you have to us, but rather, first offer your possessions to others and thus afterwards receive our possessions. But we on the contrary, since we seek not so much the profit of the soul as of money, exhort anyone coming to conversion to bring what he has, and we do not so much give him our support as sell it.[93]

Abelard was concerned about the attitude of newcomers to the religious life, for it seems some expected preferential treatment because of their riches; and some significantly tried to reclaim their 'gifts' on leaving. In his account (c.1142) of the restoration of the monastery of Saint-Martin, which was situated just outside the city wall of Tournai in Flanders, Herman of Tournai (b.c.1090) echoed Abelard's concerns. He complained that the tests for new members, formerly employed by Odo, who became abbot of the monastery in 1092, were no longer being carried out, but that everyone was being welcomed 'with open arms'.[94] The sense of improper worldly gain clearly affected the religious communities just as the sense of spiritual benefits informed the gifts of nobles.

Yet complaints about greed and accumulation were not confined to religious accounts, but also found expression in the chivalric romances, which suggests that secular and religious ideologies of giving shared some similarities. In the late twelfth-century romance *Yder*, the author of which was familiar with

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[93] Peter Abelard, 'Sermones', no.33, 593.

[94] 'quam hodie venire videamus, cum iam nullus probatur, immo ut veniat multis blanditiis et promissionibus demulcetur': Herman of Tournai, 'Liber de restauratione S.Martini Tornacensis', ed. G.Waitz, MGH SS 14, 274-317, c.68; trans. L.H.Nelson, *The Restoration of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Tournai* (Washington, 1996), p.98.

the *Erec et Enide* and the *Conte du Graal* of Chrétien de Troyes, we find an interesting complaint about spendthrift abbots:

> Li bosoignos e li vilain
> Devienent moine por le pain
> E por jeter soi de la cure
> De vivre e de la vesture...
> ...Si sunt seignors des abeies,
> Pur atriare font meinte force. (ll.3684-706)

> The needy and the bad become monks for bread and to free themselves from the trouble of finding food and clothing ... If they're masters of the abbey, they'll go to any lengths to get money.[95]

Notably the author of this romance was familiar with the *Bible* of Guiot de Provins, and twelfth-century sermons, including those of Bernard of Clairvaux.[96] Avarice was obviously a shared concern; and one imagines that the monks would have approved of the passages in *Yder* which talk of the transitory nature of earthly goods, and the dangers of covetousness:

> Fols est qui en ses biens se fie.
> Mals les ad qui bien nes aloe:
> Coveitise que homes eneue
> Ne lor soefre qu'il les aluent. (ll.3108-11)

> He who puts trust in his riches is foolish. He who does not use them well suffers for them: covetousness which torments men does not allow them to use them.[97]

So concerns about the motivation of the giver and the recipient, and the nature and appropriateness of the gift, had both a secular and a religious significance. Yet a clear distinction between the gift and possibilities of

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[95] *The Romance of Yder*, ed. and trans. A.Adams (Cambridge, 1983), p.145.
[96] Adams (ed.), *Yder*, p.11.
[97] Adams (ed.), *Yder*, p.127.

salvation is not always made in the charters, and, as monasteries relied to a large extent on funds from the lesser nobles and knights, gifts were generally acceptable.[98] It was the generosity of these nobles which was responsible for the growth of the major religious houses, and which secured the standing of many, particularly the Cistercians.

The political implications of acts of pious giving can be explored further by looking in more detail at some examples of the noble benefaction of religious institutions. Bernard himself benefited greatly from the favours of Counts Hugh and Thibaut II.[99] In 1154 the Cistercians were exempted from tolls by Count Henry:

> I, Henry, count palatine of Troyes, have granted to the servants of God at Clairvaux and its related abbeys, for the salvation of my soul and that of my father, that the monks be exempt from all tolls, duties, and taxes in all my lands.[100]

Other examples of noble benefaction included the endowment of the church of Saint-Étienne in Troyes by Henry in 1157. So, noble benefaction contributed a great deal toward the establishment and upkeep of religious institutions, and forged bonds between religious and secular lifestyles, as well as providing spiritual salvation.

Similarly secular acts of *largesse* were influenced by issues of rulership and status both in the case of the knights of romances, and the nobles of

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[98] For examples of how monks could redirect funds to their own purposes, see Little, *Religious Poverty*, pp.66-7.
[99] Evergates, *Documents*, p.135.
[100] J.Waquet (ed.), *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Clairvaux* (Troyes, 1950), I,50-51; in Evergates, *Documents*, pp.136-7.

Champagne and Flanders. Ideas of counter-benefits may have served to limit, as well as to encourage, such acts. Thus, for example, Henry the Liberal, despite his epithet, chose his donees carefully. The letter from Philip of Harvengt to Henry shows how the count established relationships of obligation with groups of clerics:

> Est et signum cui contradicitur, quod in eisdem ecclesiis diligis clericos congregare: quos propter quamdam vivendi licentiam saeculares consuetudo voluit appellare quibus ad hoc sumptus necessarios et assiduos amas reditus providere, ut illic ad serviendum et ipsi voluntarios amant et assiduos se praebere. [101]

Thus Henry himself stood to benefit from his own acts of generosity. Furthermore he explained the grounds for his favouritism of secular clerics in the revealing comment to Louis VII that one can control a canon more easily whereas an abbot may fritter away his gifts.[102]

The importance of expediency in acts of *largesse* is made clear in an episode in the account of Herman of Tournai, which suggests that Henry's fears about monastic spendthrifts were not entirely unfounded. Herman tells how, in the famine of 1094-5, Abbot Odo, in his overzealous helping of the poor, managed to spend the entire contents of the cellar and granary. As a consequence, the monks became reliant on 'gifts' themselves for their survival. Herman of Tournai describes the 'generosity' of the abbot as a failure:

> Obstupefacti omnes, ammirati sunt, tantam rem eum sine alicuius consilio fecisse, rogaveruntque eum, ut exteriorum curam alicui viro prudenti committeret.

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[101] Philip of Harvengt, 'Epistolae', letter 17, PL 203, 151-6 (154).
[102] Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire*, p.180.

> Everyone was stupefied. They were struck with amazement that he should have taken such an important action without having discussed the matter with anyone. They then asked him to turn over the care of the monastery's external affairs to some prudent man.[103]

Here the importance of *measure* in giving is seen in practice. Significantly, the power was taken from the abbot and assigned to more 'prudent' men, who were in fact noblemen before entry into monastic life. In his account Herman implies that Odo was more suited to religious contemplation than to managing the affairs of a monastery.[104] Thus economic prudence was not just an ideological issue. Herman's account highlights the responsibility of an abbot to encourage donations, and to manage them. This example of the difficulties caused by unrestricted *largesse* is matched in the case of knights; for example, Arnold, son of Baldwin of Ardres and Guines, suffered poverty after the lavish feast of his knighthood in 1181, as a consequence of his generosity to minstrels.[105]

We have seen that the giving of gifts to monasteries had benefits both for the recipient and the donor, and that 'prudence' in such affairs included an understanding of economic needs. We have also witnessed the significance which was attached to reputations of *largesse*, and the role of expectations of return in the promotion of gift-giving. Using the rhetoric of *largesse* carried with it the hope of securing social and political benefits.[106]

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[103] Herman of Tournai, 'Liber de restauratione', c.70.
[104] Odo is forced to expel the nuns without returning their entry gifts, a fact which pains Herman. He writes: 'he did not return the money that some of them had given to him because he had either given it to paupers or spent it on the congregation': 'Liber de restauratione', c.71.
[105] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.91, p.604.
[106] The notion of a 'gift' was sometimes used to hide other forms of transaction: McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, p.14; J. and F.Gies, *Merchants and Moneymen*, p.37.

Some modifications may now be made to our understanding of *largesse.* Although one needed to give freely and without avarice, one also needed to be seen to be giving; yet to consider a return is not so much to abuse a gift, as to understand its deeper social and political connotations. Indeed it might be argued that *not* to regard a gift as an amount advanced would have been a mistake. Overall, the awareness of the need to give gifts is often related to the sense of benefits which may ensue, whether spiritually or socially. In the case of public reputations, *largesse* is a social expediency; and accompanying pious donations, there exists a keen sense of the place of the gift in an exchange network, with *largesse* assuming a predominantly religious eminence. The next issue to examine, therefore, is how far the networks of exchange and obligation, as well as the religious element identified here, permeate the acts of *largesse* in chivalric romances, in order to develop an understanding of the power of *largesse* as an ideology of knighthood.

3.iii Largesse as Social Necessity: Cycles of Giving in Romance

The study of the debate about *largesse* and of examples of acts of gift-giving reveals that religious ideals and practical concerns coexisted; as Henry 'the Liberal' remarked, the bottom line of *largesse* is the threat of bankruptcy. In romances too, despite the ideal images of *largesse*, an awareness of the pressures of the economic world does exist.

The importance of maintaining the cycle of gift-exchange is seen in the effects of a break in the cycle, when knights become the victims of poverty. For

example, in the story of *Lanval* by Marie de France, the spent protagonist is thrown into a sad plight by the failure of the king to recognise his service and thus to supply him with generous gifts:[107]

> A la Pentecuste en esté
> I aveit li reis sujurné;
> Asez i duna riches duns
> E as cuntes e as baruns.
> A ceus de la Table Roünde -
> N'ot tant de teus en tut le munde -
> Femmes e teres departi,
> Par tut, fors un ki l'ot servi:
> Ceo fu Lanval, ne l'en sovint
> Ne nuls des soens bien ne li tint. (ll.11-20)

The king was there during the summer, at Pentecost, and he gave many rich gifts to counts and barons and to those of the Round Table: there was no such company in the whole world. He apportioned wives and lands to all, save to one who had served him: this was Lanval, whom he did not remember, and for whom no one put in a good word.[108]

Nobody is prepared to recommend the knight, notably because of their jealousy of him. This lack of funds isolates the hero from Arthur's court. He eventually meets a maiden who provides him with an endless supply of money in the form of a self-generating purse, so that the more he spends, the more he has left to spend. The message is thus not that *largesse* should be avoided, but rather that it ultimately pays off, and the fault remains that of the king for overlooking his knight.

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[107] Tristan is impoverished as a result of falling out of favour with King Mark: Béroul, *Le Roman de Tristan: Poème du XIIe Siècle*, ed. E.Muret, CFMA (Paris, 4th edition, 1947), ll.1644-7; A.S.Fedrick (trans.), *The Romance of Tristan* (Harmondsworth, 1970), p.85.
[108] Marie de France, *Lais*, trans. Burgess and Busby, p.73.

The nature of gifts given in chivalric romances can similarly reflect the economic needs of knights. One of the most common forms of gift in romances is the horse, and this is no accident.[109] It reflects the fact that horses were one of the most costly yet necessary possessions of the medieval knight.[110] The financial value of horses is demonstrated in *Li Contes Dou Roi Flore et de la Bielle Jehane*. The 'squire' John (who is Jehane in disguise) and his impoverished master Sir Robert sell their horses for ten 'sous de tournois',[111] and turn them into 'better money' by setting up a business, and regaining Robert's lost fortune. Similarly, Yder demonstrates the importance of horses (as well as the virtue of giving away one's riches) in his many gifts of horses, which change the fortunes of the recipients significantly. He saves the fortunes of one *gentilz hom* who had been impoverished by the death of his father and by subsequently being disinherited, by giving him two horses, worth two hundred marks or more ('dous cent mars ou plus', l.165):

> Il lui done les dous chevals
> Don il out occis les vassals.

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[109] The idea of repayment by the gift of a horse is nicely exemplified in the postscript to the vernacular biography of Thomas Becket, written by Garnier of Pont-Sainte-Maxence very soon after Becket's death in 1170: 'The abbess, Saint Thomas's sister, for her own honour and for the baron's sake, gave me a palfrey and its trappings; the very spurs were included. It was a fair throw of the dice that sent me to her house - and she does not do badly out of it either, for I shall repay her by singing her praises to everyone I meet, great and small.' Garnier goes on to mention the generosity of the ladies, who he says have also made him 'positively fat' ('tut gras') with their gifts of food and wine; and he describes also the supplies of coins, clothes and horses, which he sees as a 'splendid repayment' from his lord ('il me rent bien') for his literary exertions. Note that he vows to repay the abbess by increasing her reputation through his eulogies: *La Vie de Saint Thomas Becket*, ed. E.Walberg, CFMA (Paris, 1964), p.192; *Garnier's Becket*, trans. J.Shirley (London, 1975), p.165.

[110] 'It is impossible to be chivalrous without a horse': Denholm-Young, 'The Tournament in the Thirteenth Century', p.240. Horses were valuable and were greatly in demand: R.H.C.Davis, *The Medieval Warhorse: Origin, Development and Redevelopment* (London, 1989), pp.11, 25.

[111] *Li Contes Dou Roi Flore et de la Bielle Jehane*, ed. L.Moland and C.D'Héricault, *Nouvelles Françoises*, pp.123-4; Mason (trans.), *Aucassin and Nicolette*, p.110.

Or l'a Yder riche home feit. (*Yder*, 147-9)

He gave him the two horses whose riders he had killed. Now Yder had made him a rich man.

Many references are made in chivalric romances to horses being lost, taken from the enemy, and given on to comrades, as we have seen above in relation to tournaments.[112]

Of course, it was not sufficient to have any kind of horse: the status of knights was further denoted by the type of horse(s) he owned. The fine war-horse, or 'destrier', was worth far more, both in terms of money and knightly pride, than the palfrey ('palefroi').[113] The shame of losing horses is highlighted in *Yder* when Kay is parted from his second and then his third horse by the hero, to the jeers of Queen Guinevere's servants:

Li escrie: Danz seneschals,
Vos lessez ci trois beaus chevals.
Ki ke gaaint a vieler,
Perduz les avez a tumber.
Or se gabent cil pautenier
Qu'il vos voient peonier. (1333-38)

[one of Queen Guinevere's servants] called out to him: 'My lord Seneschal, you have lost three fine horses in this battle. Whatever is gained by playing the fiddle, you have lost them by tumbling. Now those scoundrels are laughing at you because they see you on foot.

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[112] Also Adams (ed.), *Yder*, ll.1979, 2300-311, and 2050. The importance of horses is similarly emphasised in chronicles, by references to their gaining or loss. In his chronicle of the Fourth Crusade, the Marshal of Champagne, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, makes references to the gaining of horses in battle, in this case against the Greeks: 'In this skirmish the victors gained a good number of war-horses, cobs, palfreys, and mules, and such other booty as is usual in such an affair': Geoffrey of Villehardouin, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, trans. Shaw, pp.62-3.

[113] After defeating the Red Knight, Perceval takes the knight's charger ('destrier'): *Conte du Graal*, ll.1181-2.

The importance attached to horses thus reflects real issues of money and status which concerned knights in the twelfth century. This demonstrates once again the economic and social implications of acts of *largesse*, even in relation to something as central to knightly identity as the horse. A knight's fortune may rest on the receipt of such a gift.

In fact the importance of maintaining a constant cycle of giving is emphasised in chivalric romances by the language of gift and exchange, and 'contractual obligation'. In *Le Chevalier au Lion* a cycle of gift and return favour begins when Lunete gives Yvain a magic ring, in return for the honour he once showed her at court, and it continues throughout the romance.[114] In *L'Atre Périlleux*, the vocabulary of gift and return is notable throughout the tale. The idea of indebtedness incurred through an act of *largesse* is made clear when, in return for an act of generosity made by a knight, Gawain has to pledge a gift (l.2895).[115] The knight asks for a sparrowhawk as assurance, a sure reminder to Gawain of what is owing to him. Notably Gawain is worried about not being able to repay the knight (l.2967). Similarly in *Yder*, the protagonist's generosity towards Luguain's parents is acknowledged by their son as a debt:

> Sire, oil;
> Riche socurs lur avez fet
> Ke mult lur ad done grant het;
> Vos lur savez aider a droit,
> N'i a cil ke vostre ne soit. (ll.1582-6)

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[114] Kellogg interprets the depiction of the debt and obligation generated by Yvain as a reflection of the influence of credit systems: *Medieval Artistry and Exchange*, pp.91-6.
[115] When Gawain allows his opponent to choose the weapons before they fight, the act is expressed in similar tones: Gawain is thanked for this 'generous present' ('rice present', l.2229).

> Yes, sir; you gave them very generous help which made them very happy; you know how to help them as they need to be helped, so that they both owe you allegiance.

Yder replies that 'they are mine and I am theirs' (l.1588). A sense of obligation and return accompanies many of the gift exchanges in romances.

Yet this use of the vocabulary of the gift is not restricted to literature: Duby describes the obligatory payments extorted by castellans from their men-at-arms, which were yet given the name of 'gifts', and supposedly made in reflection of the 'gratitude' of the protected.[116] In the *First Continuation* we find a fine example of this common use of the phrase 'gift' as a metaphor. When a knight rides into Arthur's court and asks for a 'gift', and this turns out to be a 'blow on the neck', we become aware of the abuse of a social convention of giving.[117] What is fascinating is that the visiting knight actually uses the socially recognised ideal of *largesse* to threaten the king, undermining his honour in one of the most damaging ways possible:

> Se m'an avïez escondit,
> Par tot le monde seroit dit;
> Certes que bien dire savroie
> Qu'a vostre cort failli avroie
> A un petit don que je quis. (ll.7177-81)

> If you refuse it to me, it will be reported throughout the world. I will surely know how to reveal that at your court I failed to find a little gift I was seeking.[118]

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[116] G.Duby, *L'Economie Rurale et la Vie des Campagnes dans l'Occident Médiéval*, trans. C.Postan, *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West* (London, 1968), p.225.
[117] A sinister edge to the term 'gift' can be found in earlier Germanic examples, where 'gift' is also associated with 'poison': Starobinski, *Largesse*, p.62.
[118] Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.12.

A good text which investigates further the interplay of the chivalric and commercial worlds, and also the role of religious ideals of giving, is the Champenois romance *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, which may have been written by Chrétien de Troyes.[119] In fact remuneration is a recurring theme in this tale; and acts of genuine *largesse* are contrasted with the ideas of financial 'return' expressed by the more mercenary members of society. Thus, it is a fitting text with which to conclude the discussion of *largesse.* In this story King William, a pious and humble man, witnesses a clap of thunder and a bright light at the time of matins, and on appealing for advice from the chaplain, is told to give away those goods which he has wrongfully acquired. When the apparition happens a third time, the king and his queen, having given away all of their goods as gifts to religious houses, go into exile and prepare to suffer poverty together.[120]

Generous giving is thus associated with God from the beginning. Yet interestingly, when the chaplain urges the king to make these gifts to the poor, hospitals, and churches, he tells William that God will eventually restore his fortune two hundredfold ('A cent doubles le vos rendra', l.162). The idea that the king's humility will win him exaltation is perhaps reminiscent of the idea of

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[119] *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, ed. M Wilmotte, *CFMA* (Paris, 1927). Translation follows that of D.Staines (trans.), *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (Bloomington, 1990). The authorship of the text remains debated: Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, pp.54-62; A.J.Holden, *Chrétien: Guillaume d'Angleterre* (Geneva, 1988), p.35.

[120] *Guillaume D'Angleterre*, ll.178-87. Other instances of monastic endowment include *Caradoc*: 'They endowed the hermitage so well that there was no abbey so rich in Brittany. For love of Caradoc, they gave it so much silver and gold, revenues, lands and fiefs that there was no more comfortable abbey in the world': Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.71; in Marie de France's *Le Fresne,* Gurun attempts to win a girl by endowing the abbey in which she resides: 'He thought of a solution: he would increase the wealth of the abbey and give it a great deal of his land, thereby enriching it for all time, for he wanted to have a lord's rights to a dwelling-place and residence. In order to join their community he gave them a generous portion of his wealth, but his motive was other than remission for his sins': Busby and Burgess (trans.), *Lais*, p.64.

'treasures in heaven' examined in the charters, which similarly promote gifts from noblemen with promises of a heavenly reward.

On the discovery that the king and queen are gone, a search is carried out, in vain. Meanwhile the couple have travelled through the forest, and eventually make their way to the sea. When her time comes, the queen delivers two baby boys in a sea-cave, and the king appeals to a group of merchants for food, giving them the assurance that they will receive due recompense: 'Que Diex le vos rende ... Et si vos doinst gaaigne a tous!' ('that God may repay you for it ... and thus grant profit to you all', ll.583-5). The merchants take the king to be a beggar, however, and demand to see this woman with her two babies. Yet on meeting the beautiful queen, they believe that she must have been abducted, and they in turn decide to take her away with them on the ship, leaving the babies with the king. They note that if he uses them wisely, they will aid him in his begging trade: 'Gart les bien, si fera que sages,/ Qu'il li racateront ses wages' (ll.687-8). The king's rejection of his treasure and subsequent life of poverty and deprivation, and his humility under the judgement of God, clearly contrast with the attitude of the merchants, who even regard a baby as a way to generate cash.[121]

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[121] In *Floire et Blancheflor*, the heroine is sold into slavery in return for a finely wrought cup, and the men who buy her expect to make a heavy profit from her: 'they've no doubt/ They'll double what they have paid out', ll.500-501. Floire takes on the guise of a merchant and claims his 'merchandise', Blancheflor, by playing the porter at chess and giving him back his winnings. When Floire gives him the cup, and the man offers his allegiance, Floire immediately takes his homage and asks him to help with getting access to Blancheflor. So Floire first appeals to the greed of the porter, and then traps him with the bonds of *largesse*: ll.1977-2079.

The theme of *largesse* is thus central to the romance of *Guillaume d'Angleterre*. It was the wrongful accumulation of possessions which caused King William to be called upon to offer redress ('amender', l.100) by giving away all of his goods, and leaving the court. Now, he is offered a purse containing gold by one sympathetic merchant among the crowd: but the king refuses this gift, which he considers to be an insult.

By a series of misfortunes, the children end up in the hands of more merchants, two of whom decide to adopt them. The king, miserable yet still worshipping God, remembers the purse, but just as he is about to take it, an eagle sweeps down and relieves him of it. The king's response is interesting, and again forms both a contrast with the rather mercenary attitude of the merchants, and more broadly a link with the themes of the charters and the moral debate about *largesse*. William blames Covetousness for this latest misfortune, and he laments the evils of this sin, including its power to increase the thirst for more:

> Ha! covoitise desloiaus,
> Tu es rachine de tos maus,
> Tu es la dois et la fontaine.
> Moult est covoitise vilaine,
> Car cui ele prent et assaut,
> Et li plus a, et plus li faut. (ll.895-900).

> Ah, disloyal Covetousness, you are the root of all evil, you are its source and its well. Covetousness is vile indeed: the man she attacks and captures, the more he has, the more he wants.

Thus William consistently adheres to his duty to God, in contrast to the merchants.

Yet *largesse* is an aristocratic, as well as a religious, duty, and in *Guillaume d'Angleterre largesse* is linked with social status, by means of the contrast between the knightly world and that of merchants, particularly in their attitudes to gifts and money. The king's appeal to the merchants for food is greeted with the ironic threat of his being thrown into the sea as 'payment': 'Batus u en la mer plonciés/ Serés ancui, s'on me veut crioire/ Au paiement de ceste foire' (ll.588-90). In their mercantile attitudes, the merchants isolate themselves from the noble way of life as well as from God. In contrast, the king has better luck at Galloway, where a wealthy citizen takes him on as a servant and advances him the sum of 300 pounds, sending him to the fairs of Bar, Provins and Troyes with the advice that he cannot fail to make money there (ll.1962-4). Unlike the merchants who failed to help the king, this man is prepared to invest in his merit on trust, and thus to make a pledge at his own risk, with an initial gift.

Meanwhile, the two young boys, Marin and Lovel, are brought up by the merchants and in due time they experience problems with these men regarding their future occupations. When their boys do not want to become skinners, the 'churls' are incensed by their refusal, and beat them. Yet this career does not come naturally to the boys, whose natures repel them from such lives of trade, as the author explains:

> Nature donc a si grant fais
> Qu'ele fet u buen u mauvais.
> Se nature peüst cangier,
> Li enfant, qui sont el dangier
> As deus vilains qui les norissent,

Tant en vilonie pourissent,
Vilain fuissent, se noureture
Se peüst combattre a nature;
Mais nature a si boine orine,
Se les aprent et endoctrine
Qu'il ne daignent mauvaisté faire;
Ne pueent as vilains retraire
Por noreture qu'il an aient;
A lor gentillece retraient,
Si s'aficent par aus meïsmes;
Par nature ont toutes les limes
Dont il se levent et escurent. (ll.1367-1383)

Nature, then, has such great influence that she makes a person good or evil. If a nature could change, the children under the authority of the two churls raising them would have grown in churlishness so that they themselves would have been churls, were Nurture able to combat Nature. But Nature had such a good origin and so gave them such good instructions that they disdained to do evil. The two were unable to imitate the churls who gave them their education. They adhered to their own nobility and improved themselves on their own. From nature they had all the equipment to exalt and refine themselves.

Theirs is an inherent nobility which cannot be tainted by such 'villainy'. Finally relenting, Lovel's adoptive father Gosselin asks him to stay, advising him thus:

Entour moi, et si aprenés
A gaaignier si com jou fis.
Qui rices est moult troeve amis;
Et si est moult vix qui nient n'a,
Ja nus ne li apartenra,
Ne ne l'aime ne ne le prise. (ll.1572-80)

Stay near me, and learn to earn your livelihood as I did. The wealthy man finds many friends. And the man who has nothing is regarded as nothing: no one will ever associate with him, no one loves him, and no one respects him.

However, as *Cligés* taught us, it is the distribution of wealth, in the form of *Largesse*, which makes a worthy man, not simply *having* money.

So the two boys both leave their homes, and they chance to meet each other and find shelter in a forest lodge. The forester is angered on finding them and threatens to take them to the King of Caithness, by whom they will, he promises, be hanged. The boys offer to the forester all of their possessions as a sign of peace; but only on actually receiving the coins into his hand does his hostility abate, as his eyes light up with covetousness: 'Et cil moult volentiers les baille/ Qui de covoitise baaille' (ll.1865-6). The fundamental values of the noble and commercial classes are again in tension when William arrives at the port of a foreign land where the lord and lady have the right to exact whichever item they desire from the ship. When the king is asked to part with his ring, the 'cost' to him is far heavier than the queen could imagine: 'Mais moult vos ai large don fait,/ Maugré moi l'ai de mon cuer trait, Car en mon doit n'estoit il mie; Or vos ai donee ma vie' (2483-7). References to payment and 'wealth' thus continually emphasise the differences between the noble classes and those who live by trade.

The final episode of the romance throws further light on these differences. When the sons are finally reunited with their natural parents, the queen wishes to reward the merchants for having looked after the boys, and they appear at the court (albeit reluctantly: we are told that they would much rather be at the fairs of 'London or Winchester, York or Lincoln', making money, ll.3130-1). On receiving a gift of ermine robes from the queen, the merchants, like the forester, are immediately preoccupied with thoughts of money, as they calculate the value of the cloaks, and they propose to sell them on. Indignant at the

queen's assertion that she wishes to *give* them the clothes, the merchants exclaim:

> Dame, ne nos tenés por sos;
> Se ces reubes estoient nos,
> Nos en feriiemes moult bien faire
> De cascune quatorze paire
> De gros aigniax et de cordé. (ll.3187-91)

> Lady, do not consider us fools. If these clothes are ours, we could have fourteen pairs of lambskins and woollens made from each one.[122]

The queen can only laugh at this mercenary response, which shows the 'folly of the two peasants' who are putting a price on a gift. For their part, they take as an insult the queen's refusal to allow them to deal with the robes in this way. Eventually the queen persuades the merchants to sell her the cloaks for thirty marks, and then to take them back, thus allowing herself to make an appropriate gift according to the noble ethos of *largesse*, without compromising their need for a commercial transaction.

The two different classes of aristocracy and bourgeoisie are thus associated with two very different economies in this romance. Truly generous acts are indeed reciprocated, and merchants are not entirely excluded from this system. The queen genuinely wishes to reward the merchants who generously took the boys in and cared for them. Their inability to comprehend the manner in which she is attempting to make the gift, and the way in which they should receive it, is presented in a humourous fashion. Yet while these merchants are to

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[122] Staines (trans.), *Complete Romances*, p.490. Note also that in the romance of *Fergus*, Gawain makes a derisory remark to the sarcastic Kay, that he should take a fiddle and he would be paid with a cloak for his service: l.3430. This romance is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

be pitied rather than despised, and are certainly good at their trade, they are ultimately also limited by it.

Other forms of generosity later repaid include the actions a young boy who discovered a horn under the king's bed, when he had disappeared into exile. He is later approached by the king and asked to sell the horn to him, but the boy states that he will give the money away, expecting no other profit. The king replies that the lad may profit still; indeed, at the end of the tale he becomes the king's chamberlain, and acquires a wife with an annual income of 1000 marks. King William himself also receives his reward in the end. Notably when he meets his sons for the first time, and is describing his adventures, the snatched purse drops out of the sky as 'Diex lor envia en present' - a 'gift' from God (l.2808).

This romance is rooted in the context of exchange, and the references to the fairs of Champagne add a particularly realistic element to it. The role of these fairs in the trade and prosperity of the towns of northern France was fundamental, and they had become an international institution by the reign of Henry the Liberal (1152-81).[123] Together with Lagni-sur-Marne (which was the site of the great tournament in 1179, described above), the three towns of Bar, Provins, and Troyes mentioned in the romance were home to the most important of the fairs of Champagne. Given that the counts of northern France actively

[123] The fairs took place six times a year, and lasted for around six weeks: see Pounds, *Economic History*, pp.357-64.

promoted these events and made policies to provide protection for merchants,[124] and also that knights did come into contact with money, *Guillaume d'Angleterre* demonstrates a realism which would presumably have appealed to its audience.[125] The romance does not avoid the issue of money, but engages with it, presenting *largesse* as the noble alternative to what is portrayed as a purely commercial way of life, based on hoarding money for its own sake. Merchants have a useful and necessary role in the romances. Money is not absent from the lives of nobles; but in the case of chivalric romances, once again, by a strange paradox, *largesse* 'pays'. This proves the validity of the lines in *Doon de Maience*, mentioned above, which explained the cyclical relationship between generosity and honour: 'soiez largez à tous; car, tant plus tu donras/ plus acquarras d'onneur et plus riche seras'.[126]

Although, in this romance and in others, nobles become involved in trade by necessity, and although members of historical courts were involved with commerce,[127] the romances insist that true noblemen do not rely on trade alone as a way of life. The message is clear: a desire for economic gain for its own sake is a form of villainy.[128] The Old French word 'avoir' had an alternative

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[124] Under Count Baldwin VII of Flanders (1111-19) one group of knights suffered a particularly severe penalty for committing an offence contrary to this peace agreement, being forced by the count to hang each other: Herman of Tournai, ' Liber de restauratione', c.24.

[125] The author of the poem supports the ideals of the aristocracy, including the belief in natural inequality corresponding with social inequality. 'Mais ces qualités de forme apparaissent comme le reflet d'un état d'esprit; elles correspondent en réalité à une conception de la vie politique et sociale': C.Foulon, 'Les tendances aristocratiques dans le roman de *Guillaume d'Angleterre*', *Romania*, 71 (1950), pp.222-37 (227).

[126] *Doon de Maience*, ed. Pey, ll.2436-7.

[127] For example, the chancellor Etienne de Provins who owned property at Provins and Troyes: Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, pp.108-110.

[128] F.Riddy highlights the references to the value and craftsmanship of objects in the post twelfth-century Flemish *Roman van Walewein*, and highlights the text itself as a product of exchange. In

meaning of 'richesse', along with the usual reference to straightforward possession. The author of *Yder* justifies the secular 'spending ethic' which is a way of life for most romance heroes, when he argues that there is no point in seeking to amass earthly riches for their own sake. He emphasises expenditure rather than accumulation: 'Cil qui atraient les tresors, /Il se destreinent aissez plus/ Ke cil quil auierent par les us' ('Those who lay up treasures, are much more unhappy than those who seek for riches to spend', ll.1710-12). In his reproach of covetousness in *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, the king encapsulates the noble virtues of *largesse* in a speech which directly contrasts with Gosselin's statement about wealth and followers, quoted earlier:

> Trop a, qui rien n'onour ne sert.
> Ja tant n'ara que noiens ert;
> N'a pas l'avoir qui l'enprisone,
> Mais cil qui le despent et done:
> Cil l'a et si le doit avoir,
> Amis et honour et avoir. (ll.919-4)
>
> He has too much who neither honors nor serves anything. However much he has, it will be of no value to him. Not he who locks away possessions, but he who dispenses and distributes them is the true possessor. This is the person, and so should he be, who has friends, honour, and wealth.

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this poem we find disdain for money in the form of the 'Evil Custom', a toll being levied on passers-by, which clearly transgresses a knight's right to exemption from toll. Once again the metaphor of payment is used ironically, as the hero Walewein kills the offending knight and, returning to the castle, reports that he 'took his hauberk as surety': 'Giving and Receiving: Exchange in the *Roman van Walewein* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Tydschrift voor Nederlandre Taal en Letterkunde*, 11 (1996), 18-29. In *Le Chevalier au Lion*, Yvain champions chivalric virtues over the desire for money when he defeats the exploitative custom at the castle of *Pesme Avanture*, where maidens are forced to work in terrible conditions and receive only a tiny portion of the profit they generate: see Chapter Four. Chivalry is here working against the fiscal application of lordship.

Only through giving away everything, did the king keep everything. Distribution is thus, for a knight, the only true guarantee of possession.

Largesse is a requirement of the good knight in romances, and expenditure is preferable to accumulation; but it is once again closely tied to a sense of reciprocation. The cycle of gift and return favour is an essential part of the way in which knights of romances survive.[129] Even laying up treasures in heaven is not the only form of *largesse* which is essential to knights, men who lived by an economy which required the fulfilment of all parts of the cycle of exchange, and an awareness of value is clearly embedded in the vocabulary of the romances. Knights rely on receiving a return, and the neglect of honourable obligations can cause problems. When money is not important in romances, goods are.

It seems clear that an awareness of the value of the gift, and of the responsibility to return the act, accompany acts of *largesse*. In fact, it might be argued that everything has an economic value. *Largesse* is the domain of knights who can afford not to talk about money *because* they have access to an alternative system, based on honour but also on expected return, and which is portrayed here as far more noble. The success of the system depends on an understanding of the set of values and the code of honour which accompany it. The sense of obliged return, even when implicit, is always present in chivalric romances; and the relationships of the gift exchange, as we have seen, were not

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[129] Merino makes the point that 'rarely (perhaps never) does the "gift" returned take the same form as the "gift" given': 'The Gift', p.13.

just important in terms of the logic of the system in romances, or the ideology of *largesse*, but were instrumental socially and economically in real life.

Conclusions

> Beneficiorum est tantum erogatur; si reddet aliquid, lucrum est, si non reddet, damnum non est. (*De ben*, I.ii.3)
>
> In benefits the book-keeping is simple - so much is paid out; if anything comes back, it is gain, if nothing comes back, there is no loss.

Largesse was an issue of great importance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and its ideological and practical significances crossed the boundaries of different social groups, including kings, knights, monks, clerics, and philosophers. Concerns about the motivations for gift-giving punctuate medieval discussions of liberality. The texts show us that despite changing commercial trends, *largesse* was still a powerful social ideal, and one whose values were not static in romance; rather they were recognised across the board. The virtue of *largesse* increased the worth of a romance knight by five times (*Cligés*, l.211); and it was still important enough to be a feature of the good leader in twelfth-century descriptions of real nobles and patrons, such as Henry the Liberal of Champagne and Philip of Flanders. Furthermore, the Germanic custom of gift-giving by a leader had now become the more universal chivalric virtue of *largesse*, the domain of lesser knights as well as leaders, and was posited as a superior system to that of the bourgeoisie classes.

The different textual types share a number of fundamental thematic and ideological similarities, such as the concern with vainglory and the religious dimension which is assigned to *largesse*, as apparent in the formulae of charters, and the romance of *Guillaume d'Angleterre* and the prologue of the *Conte du Graal.* Cicero's warnings, and Henry the Liberal's reservations, are borne out by accounts of real overspenders, such as Abbot Odo at the monastery of Saint-Martin of Tournai. The moral concept of *largesse* served to encourage behavioural modes but also actual donations; and the texts which discuss *largesse* spanned the world of clerics who were the recipients of gifts and of the nobles who provided them.

The study reveals that *largesse* was an ideal close to the hearts of many members of the nobility, and not necessarily or principally by way of escapism from 'real' life. In fact, it was the relevance of the value of *largesse* to real life which made it such a point of debate; and even in the face of increasing commercialism *largesse* offers an alternative which cannot be regarded as totally irrelevant. The chivalric ideal of *largesse* belonged to a society whose values were economically informed; and the *largesse* of romances, so often dismissed as idealistic, is not divorced from the examples of gift-exchange which we find in charters and historical narratives and can in fact reflect aspects of commercial activity. Terms of exchange are often used in describing the transfer of gifts, and at times the imagery is economic.[130] An awareness of the expectation of

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[130] Cf. J.Simpson, 'Spirituality and Economics in Passus 1-7 of the B Text', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, I (1987), pp.83-103.

largesse, and a consciousness of its power, accompany many acts of *largesse* in romances. Any speculative donations by the knights of Arthurian romance are part of a cyclical system of mutually beneficial gift and favour, sometimes with delayed action, within an honour-based community, rather than representing the specific desire of an individual to obtain a material object or benefit. This ideology distances knights from other classes, such as merchants, who are perceived as eminently inferior.

The relationships of the gift-exchange reflect the social structure of twelfth-century France, and both the material and immaterial needs of that society. Giving in its own right was still important in the twelfth century, and *largesse* flowered as a distinguishing virtue of the knightly classes which reinforced their status, setting the *chevalier* apart from other members of society. Classical tradition, religious interpretation, and popular works of fiction, all influenced the subject; and in the complex of social expectations and obligations which accompanied the acts of *largesse* which have been identified in this chapter, it seems that there was much more to *largesse* than simply giving, and that the book-keeping was anything but 'simple'.

Chapter Four: Hospitality

The previous chapter has argued that *largesse* was one of the most important virtues of a noble knight, according to chivalric romances, and that as a quality recognised and valued in a nobleman, *largesse* was a highly significant social and political expedient in the twelfth century. Hospitality was another of the principal values of chivalry,[1] and it too was a form of generosity, being the act of welcoming, providing for, and entertaining visitors, whether friends or strangers.[2] Discussion of the virtues and bounds of hospitality, and actual descriptions of acts of hospitality, appear in a variety of texts which had connections with the courts of twelfth-century northern France, including historical narratives and chivalric romances.

While scholars have considered various aspects of hospitality, and discussed in impressive detail its motifs in chivalric romances, there is to date no detailed study of the meaning and role of hospitality as a chivalric virtue which is wide-reaching in its use of a variety of genres, while specific in focusing on a particular geographical area and period against which these representations may be tested. In northern France in the twelfth century, as we shall see, a number of ideologies of hospitality were in existence, and the virtue

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[1] Studies include: M.T.Bruckner, *Narrative Invention in Twelfth-Century French Romance: The Convention of Hospitality (1160-1200)* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1980); H.Oschinsky, *Der Ritter unterwegs und die Pflege der Gastfreundschaft*, diss. (Halle, 1900); Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, pp.51-99.

[2] Hospitality and *largesse* feature together in Philippe of Navarre's account of courteous knights: 'Jones doit bien estre joliz et mener joieuse vie, et doit estre cortois, et larges, et accoillir biau la gent, et faire cortoisement a plaisir selonc son pooir as prives et as estranges': *Les Quatre Ages de l'homme*, ed. M.de Fréville (Paris, 1888), p.38.

of hospitality began to take on an increasingly noble emphasis. By examining the different traditions at the background of chivalric hospitality, and the discourses of different individuals and social groups regarding hospitality, the development of hospitality as a chivalric virtue and its social importance may be assessed.

One preliminary point that deserves to be emphasised is that the chivalric ideal of hospitality of course had a basis in real life: travel was commonplace in the twelfth century, and yet journeys were potentially hazardous. As we have seen, the counts of northern France took a particular interest in ensuring the safe passage of merchants and others; counts also took some of the responsibility for the upkeep of roads and the building and maintenance of bridges.[3] The construction of stone bridges flourished at this time, particularly in France, and King John ordered the completion of London Bridge by a French master, Isembert, having been impressed with the fine bridges he saw in France.[4] Whether journeying to war, attending a tournament or a ceremony at court, or travelling to consolidate political power,[5] knights and lords required accommodation. Yet while hospitality was a practical necessity, and was by no means a phenomenon new to the twelfth century, we shall see that at this time it acquired an ethical and honorific value which went beyond

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[3] Philippe de Beaumanoir, *Coutumes de Beauvaisis*, F.R.P.Akehurst (trans.), *The Coutumes de Beauvaisis of Philippe de Beaumanoir* (Philadelphia, 1992), pp.263-8.

[4] The well-being of travellers was considered to be important, and the maintenance of roads and bridges was taken seriously: J.J.Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*, trans. L.T.Smith (London, 1921), pp.29-44. For an overview see also N.Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller*, trans. C.Hillier (Woodbridge, 1989).

[5] J.W.Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c.936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993).

the purely functional. A sense of the right to hospitality seems to have existed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: in 1111, the travelling Louis the Fat took with him a letter stating his rights to hospitality, 'usualis et consuetudinaria hospitatio'.[6]

This chapter explores hospitality in its social and symbolic capacity, as a form of social bonding and a means of increasing status and asserting power. It seeks to determine the nature and importance of hospitality as a set of social forms in the twelfth century, and the role of hospitality in consolidating the sense of membership of an exclusive noble group. The rise of hospitality as a chivalric virtue will be set against the existing traditions of hospitality, and also the growing interest in modes of behaviour and forms of *courtoisie* at the courts of northern France in the twelfth century. The problems generated by the clash of different traditions, and the increasingly secular emphasis being given to hospitality, will be explored. In order to deal with these issues, the chapter is divided into three sections, as set out below.

4.i. Hospitality and Its Traditions. The first section deals with traditions of hospitality, defining the key ideologies of hospitality which existed in the twelfth century, and the codes of behaviour which they created. The traditions of religious and monastic institutions; the advice found in courtesy books, those books on noble manners which dealt with hospitality;[7] and the instructions about hospitality in the chivalric romances, which were written for the courts of

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[6] Oschinsky, *Der Ritter unterwegs*, pp.7-8.
[7] M.T.Brentano, *Relationship of the Latin* Facetus *Literature to the Medieval English Courtesy Poems* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1935); Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy.*

northern France, will be considered. The aim is to compare the perception of hospitality as a religious duty with the notion of hospitality as a secular virtue, exploring the obligations involved with these acts of hospitality, in order to assess the significance of chivalric hospitality.

4.ii. Hospitality in Practice. How did such ideologies inform practice? The second section explores further the nature of the guest-host relationship, examining evidence of the social pressures involved with acts of hospitality, and establishing how far its codes and expectations made hospitality a self-conscious act for nobles. Through an analysis of ritual and ceremony I seek to establish the power of hospitality as a means of confirming or increasing reputation, honour, political power, and social status.

4.iii. Hospitality: A Virtue of Nobles. What was the effect of the increasingly secular emphasis on hospitality? The consequences of the secularisation of hospitality are considered in a study of the relevance of wealth and social status to the provision of hospitality, and of episodes involving payment for hospitality. In these ways we can ascertain the extent to which a chivalric code of hospitality embraced the specific concerns of knights.

4.i Hospitality and Its Traditions

The purpose of this first section is to examine the inherited traditions of hospitality which existed in the twelfth century, in order that we may then determine the different factors which influenced the growth of hospitality as a chivalric value, and the significance of its secularisation. Attitudes to

hospitality in religious and monastic sources will be set alongside the tradition in courtesy books, and in romance didacticism, and areas of similarity or disparity in their representations of hospitality will be noted. It may be significant that ideas about courteous behaviour and rules of hospitality were being expressed in religious establishments from an early stage;[8] and the idea that chivalric romances played a part in establishing a noble ethos of hospitality is an important part of the reassessment of the role and importance of literary texts, which forms part of the methodology of this thesis.

The search for old traditions bearing on hospitality may usefully be started by considering monastic attitudes to hospitality. Monasteries played a prominent part in the provision of hospitality to nobles. This was sometimes due to their location in the more deserted regions of the country,[9] and yet it was also necessitated by their political relationships with the knights and counts of northern France. The previous chapter discussed the relationships between religious institutions and the nobility in relation to the theme of gift-exchange; political ties were also an important factor in determining acts of hospitality.[10]

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[8] Monastic institutions encouraged courteous behaviour in general, as well as in their acts of hospitality: Brentano, *Relationship of the Latin* Facetus *Literature*, pp.11-12; Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, pp.22-3.

[9] Many Cistercian monasteries were located in the forest areas of Champagne: see Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, p.21.

[10] In Germany monasteries played an essential role in assuring the effectiveness of rulership by itinerance, and the *servitium regis* had a great influence on the organisation of monastic property, and monastic ideology. These rights of service due to a king included hospitality, in return for the various privileges enjoyed by monastic institutions, including immunity from taxes and local jurisdiction, and their power to elect: Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, pp.1-2, 85-6, 153-4.

Hospitality was also a fundamental role of monasteries for religious reasons, and it is to the ideologies of religious institutions that we turn now.

The Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia is a key source of information about monastic attitudes to hospitality. In the chapter of the Rule which is devoted to the subject, 'De Hospitibus Suscipiendis',[11] Benedict discussed the proper reception of guests. This account set a standard for the treatment of guests,[12] and in it are promoted a set of forms intended to define correct behaviour. The sense of the duty to provide hospitality, and the need to greet a guest warmly, begin the chapter, in the following statement which emphasises the virtue of taking in strangers, and of treating a guest as if he were Jesus himself:

> Omnes supervenientes hospites tamquam Christus suscipiantur, quia ipse dicturus est: 'Hospes fui, et suscepistis me' [Matthew 25:35].
>
> Let all guests that come be received like Christ, for he will say: 'I was a stranger and ye took me in'.[13]

In receiving a guest, the host is in effect receiving Christ: Benedict continues 'Christus in eis adoretur, qui et suscipitur' ('so let Christ be worshipped in them, for indeed he is received in their persons').[14] The idea that Christ resides in the form of the stranger is of great importance in the Rule, and it is this which necessitates the propriety with which every guest must be received:

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[11] Benedict of Nursia, *Sancti Benedicti Regula: The Rule of St Benedict: A Commentary*, ed. P.Delatte, trans. J.McCann (London, 1921), pp.330-42; J.McCann (trans.), *The Rule of St Benedict* (London, 1976), c.53, pp.57-9.
[12] Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, pp.25-7; Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller*, p.82.
[13] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.330.
[14] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.334; McCann (trans.), *Rule*, c.53, p.57.

Ut ergo nuntiatus fuerit hospes, occurratur ei a priore vel a fratribus, cum omni officio charitatis ...
In ipsa autem salutatione omnis exhibeatur humilitas. Omnibus venientibus sive discedentibus hospitibus, inclinato capite, vel prostrato omni corpore in terra.

As soon, therefore, as a guest is announced, let the superior or some brethren meet him with all charitable service ...
In the greeting of all guests, whether they be arriving or departing, let the greatest humility be shown. Let the head be bowed or the whole body prostrated on the ground.[15]

These rules are influenced by biblical portrayals of hospitality, which are based on charity and humility. The need to welcome strangers is made clear in the Bible, for 'just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me';[16] 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it'.[17] The story of Abraham in *Genesis* is a particularly important source to consider in this light as a model of hospitality. The three angels who were received by Abraham were seen by commentators to be an allegory of the Trinity.[18] Abraham was therefore receiving the Lord in his act of hospitality, an idea which clearly affected the Benedictine view of the nature of hospitality. Indeed the description of his hospitable actions finds several parallels in the Rule. In *Genesis*, Abraham receives the three 'visitors' by running to meet them, and

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[15] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.333-4; McCann (trans.), *Rule*, c.53, pp.57-8.
[16] *Matthew* 25:40.
[17] *Heb.* 13:2.
[18] The alternative use of singular and plural to describe the guests in *Genesis* 18 was interpreted as representing the nature of the trinity: M.Andrew and R.Waldron (eds.), *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript* (London, 1978), p.137.

bowing to the ground. He then offers them water with which to wash their feet.

Similarly St Benedict rules thus:

> Aquam in manibus Abbas hospitibus det; pedes hospitibus omnibus tam Abbas, quam cuncta congregatio lavet.
>
> Let the abbot give the guests water for their hands; and let both abbot and community wash the feet of all guests'.[19]

This ritual would bring to mind the story of Abraham's hospitality, and also Christ's washing of the disciples' feet.

Having greeted the visitors, Abraham brings food to them, and commands them to rest themselves.[20] In the Benedictine Rule the guest, having been welcomed, is taken inside and shown a degree of comfort. Benedict emphasises that the guest, having been met by the superior or brethren, and then led to prayer, should have 'all kindness' (*humanitas*) shown to him,[21] while they await the meal.

Ideas about table etiquette are also worth considering: the Bible emphasises in particular controlled actions and speech, and does not encourage excessive feasting:

> Are you seated at the table of the great? Do not be greedy at it.
> (Ecclesiasticus, 31:12)
> How ample a little is for a well-disciplined person! (31:19)

St Benedict appears to have adhered to the idea of measure. *Ecclesiasticus* encourages hosts to be generous with provisions: 'people bless the one who is liberal with food, and their testimony to his generosity is trustworthy' (31:23).

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[19] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.336; McCann (trans.), *Rule*, c.53, p.58.
[20] *Gen.*18:1-8.
[21] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.336; McCann (trans.), *Rule*, c.53, p.58.

Yet according to the Benedictine Rule only the superior was allowed to break his fast on account of a guest, and the other brethren had to behave according to normal policy.[22] In this way Benedict actually restricted the degree of involvement of the monastic community in an act of hospitality.

According to the *Vita Prima Bernardi*, which was begun around 1147 by William, abbot of St.Thierry, twelfth-century monks adhered closely to these rules of fasting. For example, when the pope travelled to Clairvaux after meeting the emperor at Liège he was greeted with a modesty which contrasts with examples of noble hospitality, as will be seen, for he met with 'the quietest and most affectionate of voices, instead of high flown speeches and loud acclaim'. Visitors witnessed the poor bread and simplicity of the meal as the monks made festival 'not with meats, but with their delight in virtue'.[23] The founders of Clairvaux endured coarse food, such as a bread made from barley, millet and vetch. We are told that one monk, staying in the guest house, took a sample of the food that he had been given away from the monastery, to show to others.[24]

Hospitality was thus perceived as a form of charity, and a religious duty, and one which should be made available to all, although it is notable that Benedict particularly welcomes the poor and pilgrims, in whom Christ is 'more

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[22] McCann (trans.), *Rule*, c.53, p.58.
[23] William of St.Thierry, 'Vita Prima Bernardi', PL 185 (Paris, 1879), I, 225-468; *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux: The Story of his Life as Recounted in the Vita Prima Bernardi*, trans. G.Webb and A.Walker (London, 1960), p.79.
[24] William of St.Thierry, 'Vita Prima Bernardi', PL 185, I; *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Webb and Walker, p.45. According to other accounts, though, there was a fine line between fasting and feasting; alternative opinions of the monks' attitudes to hospitality when entertaining rich and noble guests will be discussed below.

received' ('quia in ipsis magnis Christus suscuipitur').[25] The need to be prepared to accept travellers at all times was highlighted by St Benedict, who acknowledged that guests could arrive at all hours: 'incertis horis supervenientes hospites'.[26] He required that a sufficient number of beds should always be ready for them in the guest-house.[27] Yet the potential of acts of hospitality to corrupt virtue is evident in Benedict's restrictions on who could be involved.

For the reception of guests was also a social matter. It should be noted that despite the notion of providing hospitality to all, the Rule also recognises a need to protect the host: Benedict mentions the 'kiss of peace' which occurred between the guest and the host, which he says should not be given until after prayers, in case of 'delusions of the devil' ('propter illusiones diabolicas').[28] This notion of the kiss of peace highlights the fact that hospitality brought with it dangers, and that there was a need to make an uncertain relationship into a bond of 'friendship'. The virtue of hospitality in the protection it affords a guest is made clear in the Rule, and it may have been further emphasised by the biblical story of Sodom which directly follows the account of Abraham's hospitality, for in this tale the angels are taken in by Lot and defended by him against the ravages of the depraved townsmen, even at the expense of his daughters' safety.[29] The awareness of danger in acts of hospitality, whether the

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[25] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.337.
[26] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.338.
[27] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.339.
[28] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.334.
[29] *Gen.*19:1-11.

risk was perceived as supernatural or more concrete, will be explored further in the next section.

The Cistercians' increased participation in political affairs is of particular interest in the context of the social and political ramifications of hospitality.[30] The lives of prominent Cistercian figures such as Bernard of Clairvaux ensured interaction between the monasteries and the outside world.[31] So, the question that arises is: how did the Cistercians, with their theoretical emphasis on withdrawal from the world, at the beginning of the twelfth century, meet the need of providing suitable accommodation and recognition for noblemen; and how did monasteries regulate and control their provision of hospitality?

Let us examine further the restrictions placed on monastic hospitality in Benedict's Rule. St Benedict built into the Rule a number of safeguards which might be seen to have suited the Cistercians' ideology of isolation and introspection. Despite his encouragement of good service to guests, Benedict was careful to emphasise the separateness of guests from everyday monastic duty, which must not be interrupted: 'Let there be a separate kitchen for the abbot and guests, so that the brethren may not be disturbed'.[32] The existence of a separate guest-house, or *cella hospitum*, in many monasteries ensured the

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[30] M.G.Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform, 1098-1180* (Stanford, 1996), pp.2-4. Newman argues that there is no discrepancy between the increased involvement of the Cistercians in political and ecclesiastical affairs and their doctrine of withdrawal, the desire of reform being the driving force behind both.

[31] For examples of many major political events in which Bernard of Clairvaux had a key role, see William of St. Thierry, 'Vita Prima Bernardi', PL 181, I, 225-468.

[32] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.338.

division of guests and ordinary brethren, and Benedict asserted that he who looked after the guests must be a brother whose soul is full of the 'fear of God',[33] so that monks would not be distracted by tales of outside life. In these ways Benedict limited the impact of other ideas and ways of life: 'Let no one, without special instructions, associate or converse with guests'.[34] Other brethren were commanded to acknowledge a guest with a polite gesture, and permitted only to explain that they were not allowed to enter into conversation with him. Thus ultimately hospitality was not allowed to encroach upon the rest of monastic life, which carried on unaffected for the most part. In the words of Delatte, the monastic code of hospitality could be 'expanded or contracted according to need and time.'[35] The measures used to limit the provision of hospitality, and to protect the host, are thus of importance in monastic accounts, and highlight some of the potential dangers of hospitality.

It is against this background that aristocratic hospitality gained its salience. Did secular accounts share similarities with the religious interpretation of hospitality? One account which would suggest that monastic hospitality provided an important model is a story provided by Walter Map. The idea that God resides in the figure of the guest occurs in the story of Conan, a brigand, in the *De Nugis Curialium.* Conan was planning to plunder a Welsh knight, but decided against it when he saw the knight taking in another knight, who had

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[33] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.339; McCann (trans.), *Rule* , c.53, p.58-9.
[34] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, p.340; McCann (trans.), *Rule*, c.53, p.59.
[35] *Rule*, ed. Delatte, pp.331-2.

sent his page in advance to arrange hospitality. By granting hospitality, Conan tells his companions, this knight had taken in God:

> Hunc quem cupimus depredare militem residere decet in pace; suscepit enim hospicio militem qui sub nomine caritatis, ut nostratum est mos, illud peciit, habetque secum hospitem in ipso Deum.
>
> This knight whom we meant to rob must be left in peace, for he has taken in a knight who asked hospitality in the name of charity, as our custom is; and in him he has God for a guest.[36]

After being reproached by his men for this retreat, however, Conan did in fact attack the Welsh knight, only to be defeated by the guest. Conan's response to his defeat was that he knew God to be in there ('Sciebam Deum intus esse'). This makes an interesting link between guests and God, showing hospitality to be sacred and to have its roots in the fear of God, while also demonstrating the secularisation of religious ideals and their application to knights.

Like St Benedict's Rule, chivalric romances and courtesy books, which flourished in the twelfth century, also set out a code of desirable behaviour for guests and hosts. The popularity of the romances at courts in the twelfth century, and the use of courtesy books as teaching texts, highlights the significance of these texts as sources for the study of hospitality as a chivalric virtue. These texts describe and exemplify a set of codes intended to encourage correct behaviour, and both genres bear a didactic and prescriptive tone in their references to hospitality. In chivalric romances, episodes of hospitality are frequent, and often follow a definable pattern and use a clearly identifiable set

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[36] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ii.24, pp.196-9 (196-7).

of motifs. The following passage from *Erec et Enide* illustrates well the initial precepts of good hospitality, according to chivalric romances. Erec is at this point pursuing a villainous knight and his dwarf after an incident in the forest.

The knight has just passed with his dwarf into a fortified town, and has been greeted with joy by the townspeople, although they ignore Erec, who is unknown to them. A vavasour, however, is keen to offer his poor lodgings to the noble stranger. Erec is greeted warmly by this man:

> Erec pansa que il estoit
> preudom: tost le herbergeroit;
> par mi la porte antre an la cort;
> Li vavasors contre lui cort;
> einz qu'Erec li eüst dit mot,
> li vavasors salüé l'ot:
> "Biax sire, fet il, bien vaingniez.
> Se o moi herbergier daingniez,
> vez l'ostel aparellié ci." (ll.381-90)

> Erec thought he [the vavasour] was a gentleman who would give him lodging without delay. Erec entered the courtyard through the gate. The vavasour ran to meet him; before Erec had said a word, the vavasour had greeted him. 'Good sir,' said he, 'welcome! If you deign to lodge with me, here are your lodgings already prepared.'[37]

The good intentions of this man are clear to Erec - even before he has offered the knight hospitality. Erec is freely and politely offered lodgings, and is furthermore allowed to choose whether or not to take up the offer; at other times a guest is persuaded more forcefully to take, or to remain at, lodgings, as will be seen. This nobleman's granting of lodging to an unknown knight

[37] Kibler, pp.41-2.

demonstrates a charitable attitude which seems to accord with the policies of St Benedict.[38]

According to these conventions, then, as in the Benedictine Rule, a guest is to be greeted honourably. The correct reception of a guest is extremely important in romances, and is often characterised by a rushing to meet the knight, a friendly embrace, or a respectful greeting.[39] In courtesy books it is similarly seen as fundamental that the guest receives a warm welcome. *Urbanus Magnus*, a treatise on manners written for Henry II, also encourages such welcoming behaviour.[40]

Despite the 'open house' policy described above, sometimes an offer of hospitality is impromptu, and warning of a knight's expected arrival is sent ahead, usually by means of a messenger. When forewarning does occur it is seen as courtly, as it allows the place of abode to be prepared in advance in the appropriate fashion. The following instruction in *Le Chevalier à l'Épée* provides an illustration:

> Toz jorz est costume et usage,
> S'uns chevaliers cortois et sage
> En moinne un autre aveques lui,
> Que il envoie devant lui
> Fere son ostel atorner,
> Que il i porroit tost trover,
> Qui lor venue ne savroit,
> Tel chose qui li desplairoit. (ll.125-53)
>
> It is always proper and accepted behaviour for a prudent and courtly knight who is bringing another along with him to send

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[38] The importance of the noble status of a guest will be discussed later in this chapter.
[39] *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ll.3797-806; Kibler, p.342.
[40] 'Clericus aut miles ad te si uenerit hospes/ Occurrens properes illi mellire salutes': Daniel of Beccles, *Urbanus Magnus*, ed. J.G.Smyly (Dublin, 1939), ll.2343-4.

> word ahead that his lodgings should be prepared, for if their arrival is not expected he might easily find something which might displease him.[41]

Again, the courtesy book *Urbanus Magnus* also highlights advance warning as a virtue.[42]

Once greeted and received thus, a guest must be adequately provided for. Yet the duties do not lie with the host alone, and the guest is also expected to behave according to certain behavioural conventions. The various duties of guests and hosts are explored in some depth in romances and courtesy books. For example, having arrived, the guest should dismount and disarm, and his horse should be tended to by the host. Examples of these conventions may be found in the *Conte du Graal* (ll.3058-662), and also in *Urbanus Magnus*, which states that nobody should enter lodgings on horseback (ll.1448-50). In *Erec et Enide*, when Erec lodges with the friendly vavasour, he dismounts and disarms, and the vavasour's daughter then takes the horse and feeds and cleans it. She then tends to Erec immediately, leading him upstairs by the hand, according to notions of appropriate behaviour: 'qu'ele n'estoit mie vilainne' ('for she was in no way ill-bred', ll.473-6).[43] Guests and hosts are obviously obliged to behave according to an established code of hospitality. It is worth looking closely at

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[41] Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.89.
[42] 'Visere cum cupias caros, fidosque sodales/ Nuntius aduentum precedens nuntiet illis': Smyly (ed.), *Urbanus Magnus*, ll.1445-6. Other examples in chivalric romances of the advanced preparation of lodgings include: *Erec et Enide*, ll.3178-92, ll.6392-7; *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, ll.2034-44.
[43] Kibler, p.43.

these conventions for what they reveal about expected behaviour in an act of hospitality, particularly as knights sometimes fail to adhere to the rules.

The consequences of not complying with expectations are in fact explored in romances, notably in their examples of knights not doing as they are supposed to. For example, the failure on the part of a guest to dismount or disarm can signify hostility, or at the very least rudeness. This appears to be a general rule of courtesy in chivalric romances: in the *Conte du Graal* young Perceval naïvely rides into Arthur's court still mounted on his horse, and consequently knocks off the king's hat with his javelin when he turns around (l.1000). This episode is imitated in *L'Atre Périlleux*, when Escanor rides into Arthur's court on his horse thus:

> Tant fu orgellox le vassal
> Qu'ainques ne retint son ceval
> Tant que il vint devant le roi,
> Et se vint par itel desroi
> Que son frain hurta a le table. (ll.155-9)
>
> This knight was so haughty that he didn't rein in his horse until he was right in front of the King, and he was riding so recklessly that his bridle crashed into the table.[44]

Here the knight is described as arrogant for having willingly behaved in this fashion. He is, in fact, intending to challenge the bravery of the knights of the court, and his rude entrance reflects this by signifying an intentional violation of accepted customs.

One reason why such customs exist would seem to be to encourage a positive atmosphere of companionship at the first meeting of strangers. So it is

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[44] Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.111.

that at the very beginning of the *Chevalier de la Charrete*, for example, the knight entering in full armour who intends to challenge the court similarly fails to present himself in the manner of a guest (ll.31ff.), and thus withholds himself from the guest-host relationship. He remains, appropriately in this case, a figure of potential danger. The hostile intentions of a guest can therefore be reflected in his failure to conform with behavioural codes. In this way hospitality is a matter of delicacy and etiquette; it also begins to emerge as a form of contract, as a series of obligations attach themselves to guests and hosts from the outset.

The obligations continue when a guest has been received into his lodgings. The above analysis of the Benedictine Rule showed that a guest must be respected and provided for; in chivalric romances and courtesy books it is also important that the guest experiences a joyful atmosphere during his stay. In fact the portrayal of gaiety is a part of the host's way of honouring a guest. In the example from *Erec et Enide* cited above, the vavasour rejoices because of his guest: 'de son oste grant joie fet' (l.396). *Urbanus Magnus* even warns a host to feign joy if necessary.[45] There are in fact many examples in chivalric romances of the joy displayed by hosts on account of guests, even when the hosts are full of grief at a misfortune, or in fear of impending danger.[46] In *Le Chevalier au Lion*, the knight's hosts are fearful of the combat due the next day with the giant, 'Harpin of the Mountain', but hide this according to the requirements of hospitality:

Ensi molt longuemant ne finent

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[45] Smyly (ed.), *Urbanus Magnus*, ll.857-8.
[46] Putter discusses the motif of joy in romances and courtesy books: *Sir Gawain*, pp.72-84.

de joie feire et de plorer:
joie por lor oste enorer
font sanz ce que talant n'en aient,
car d'une aventure s'esmaient
qu'il atendent a l'andemain. (ll.3816)

So for a long while they continued in this manner, alternating joy and sorrow: in order to honour their guest they behaved joyfully in spite of themselves, for they were fearful of an adventure they were expecting the next day.[47]

In *Erec et Enide*, even though the daughter of the poor vavasour wore a tattered dress, 'so old that it was worn through at the elbows' (ll.407-8), they still served Erec well, and all had as much as they needed. Thus it is that in romances a mien of friendliness and generosity must be maintained for the sake of the guest, to the extent that the code of hospitality is seen to override normal behaviour.

Further comparison between the Benedictine Rule and the conventions of hospitality in chivalric romances reveals further areas of correspondence. When a knight has entered lodgings in chivalric romances, he is often given fresh clothes, and then is seated comfortably, perhaps by a fire, while the meal is awaited;[48] a guest should be similarly made comfortable according to the Benedictine Rule, as we have seen, with the exception that the emphasis would be not on courtly entertainments but on prayer. In chivalric romances when the meal is ready, bowls of water will be brought to the company, who will wash their hands.[49] We have already seen that such a ritual had important religious

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[47] Kibler, p.342.
[48] *Erec*, ll.477-84; *Conte du Graal*, ll.1551-6, 7950-5; *Yvain*, ll.5420-3.
[49] *Erec*, l.500; *Yder*, l.653.

connotations. Yet in secular accounts these rituals appear to have changed in meaning. The mutation of religious practice into secular forms is further suggested by Gerald of Wales's account of Welsh hospitality, where the act symbolises welcome and acknowledges the guest status of the visitor: 'deinde statim aquam offerentibus si pedes ablui permiserint, hospitio suscepti sunt' ('They give you water so that you may wash your feet and that means that you are a guest').[50] Washing is thus an act which denotes the honouring and acceptance of the guest.

After the hand-washing in accounts of hospitality, the meal commences. The meal itself is a symbolic event, and behaviour at this time can be as important as the actual food.[51] Under normal circumstances, in chivalric romances the food at these events is plentiful, and it is worth considering how lay accounts of feasting compare with the restrained nature of the Benedictine meal. The quantity and quality of food and drink available at the table in lay accounts of hospitality are often dwelt upon with some relish, and will be examined in the next section, but significantly also evident is a degree of concern about proper refinement at the table, along the lines of the biblical representations. The need to speak in moderation only is emphasised in *Ecclesiasticus* 32; and the *Disticha Catonis* offers similar advice: 'Inter

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[50] Gerald of Wales, 'Descriptio Kambriae', I.10, p.183; Thorpe (trans.), *The Description of Wales*, p.236.
[51] Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, pp.18-19.

conuiuas fac sis sermone modestus,/ Ne dicare loquax, cum uis urbanus haberi' (Talk little at feasts, because you will want to be considered polite).[52]

As we have seen, the *Disticha Catonis* was a popular school-text throughout the Middle Ages.[53] Together with the *Facetus 'cum nihil utilius'*, which is based on the *Disticha Catonis* (hence the name 'supplementum catonis'),[54] it influenced the development of the courtesy books.[55] John of Salisbury alluded to the debated authorship of this text,[56] but praised nevertheless the moral effectiveness of the work: 'In libello quoque quo paruuli initiantur et uirtutis instructio'.[57] Furthermore, Walter Map tells us that King Louis VI (1108-37) also called upon the authority of its writer when he was chastised by his men for retreating from an attack on Count Theobald IV of Blois-Champagne, whom he had heard was unwell. Louis defended his actions, citing a phrase from Cato, whom he called 'the wisest of men since Solomon'.[58] The influence of such texts, and the value they had in inciting courteous behaviour at table, and also in other situations, are thus demonstrated.

Restrained behaviour at the table also features as a motif in chivalric romances, as illustrated by Perceval's plight in the *Conte du Graal* when the grail is brought into the room and he acts in a way for which he is later

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[52] Chase (ed.), 'The Distichs of Cato', 19.
[53] Chase (ed.), 'The Distichs of Cato', pp.2-4.
[54] Morawski (ed.), *Le Facet en Français* (Poznan, 1923), p. xvi; C.Shroeder (ed.), *Der deutsche Facetus* (Berlin, 1911).
[55] Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, p.65.
[56] 'Cato uel alius (nam auctor incertus est)': John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb, II, VII.9, p.125.
[57] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb, II, VII.9, p.125.
[58] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, v.5, pp.458-61 (460-1).

chastised. Having been warned in his days of training not to indulge in excessive talking, he remains silent and thus fails to ask about the grail. Yet he later learns that he was wrong not to have spoken up (*Conte du Graal*, ll.3450ff). The closeness between the didactic sections of this romance and the emphasis in the courtesy books on moderation in speaking is interesting.[59] Chrétien de Troyes uses the obligations of hospitality to explore the tensions which play on a knight.

Bourdieu has argued that codification of behaviour is 'particularly indispensable in situations in which the risks of collision, conflict and accident, hazard and chance are particularly important'.[60] Taking in a stranger carries its risks for both guest and host, as it involves the acceptance of an unknown figure in a place unfamiliar to him; both figures are potentially at risk, and a process of socialisation must take place.[61] This suggests that by employing a convention of hospitality which entails such rituals as those described above, and by adopting the unequal roles of guest and host, the parties place themselves outside the potentially confrontational position of strangers. A guest is no longer a stranger but more a friend, and he is entitled to be honoured.

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[59] In *Fergus of Galloway* by Guillaume le Clerc, the guest is directly given advice on courtly behaviour by his host, in a tone similar to that of the courtesy books. The scenario is the same as in the *Conte du Graal* when the young Perceval is instructed in chivalry by his host, the knight who also dubs him: *The Romance of Fergus*, ed. W.Frescoln (Philadelphia, 1983), ll.895-1264; *Fergus of Galloway: Knight of King Arthur*, trans. D.D.R.Owen (London, 1991).

[60] P.Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Toward a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. M.Adamson (Oxford, 1990), p.80.

[61] In this sense hospitality is a state of 'suspended hostility': J.Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Schechem: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge, 1977), p.112.

The study so far has revealed that both parties were indeed involved in a relationship of mutual obligation in an act of hospitality. While lodging a guest, it is the obligation of the host to provide that which is within his means. It is also the obligation of the guest to be grateful for this, and to accept what the host offers with dignity. Yet while the host must offer, the guest must not take of his own accord: the message is not so much 'make yourself at home', as 'allow me to make you feel at home'. The host must volunteer hospitality, welcome the guest, provide food and entertainment, and show joy, even to the extent of hiding grief, and the guest must dismount, disrobe, show gratitude, and be polite.

The review of the etiquette of hospitality as described in the didactic accounts of religious and secular texts has suggested that a different set of priorities informed religious and lay attitudes to hospitality. On the one hand, it is evident that several of the motifs which have been studied here are common to lay and religious accounts. All of the texts emphasise the need to give a guest shelter and comfort, and entertain the hope that a host will accrue honour by providing for his guest, although the nature of this honour differs. Religious accounts advise against excessive feasting or displays of splendour, sharing little of the joy in excess and splendour which characterises the accounts of hospitality in chivalric romances.[62] In religious accounts there is a sense that 'virtuous' hospitality is approved by God, and that a heavenly honour will come to the host in the future as a result of his actions. Yet in romances the sacred

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[62] In fact, monastic opinion warned against excessive joy: Jaeger, *Origins of Courtliness*, p.171.

quality of hospitality appears to have adopted a secular form, in the honour which comes to the host in entertaining a worthy guest. The next section puts these ideals of hospitality to the test, in an examination of the social and political factors which accompanied acts of hospitality as described in chronicles and chivalric romances.

4.ii Hospitality in Practice

This section considers practical aspects of hospitality, exploring its more problematical moments in chivalric romances and in chronicles, and investigates further the nature of the guest-host relationship in an examination of instances of the failure or twisting of the social custom and chivalric ideal of hospitality. The study of acts of hospitality between nobles allows us to assess the assimilation and adaptation of these ideologies in the twelfth century, how far hospitality was informed by social and political agendas, and whether the chivalric code of hospitality really did serve as a value which united social groups.

According to Bourdieu, ritual behaviour 'makes things simple, clear, communicable'.[63] However, in the case of hospitality, such codification can also create a false sense of harmony, as chivalric romances make clear in their expression of some of the problems of hospitality. The etiquette of hospitality can in fact act as a screen, allowing either guest or host to hide their real intentions, and in this capacity it actually breeds conflict.[64] This section

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[63] Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, p.82.
[64] This is explored by Putter, *Sir Gawain*, pp.52-3, 84-99.

considers the social and political implications of acts of hospitality further, beginning by investigating instances of conflict in chronicle accounts.

It has already been suggested that hospitality involved a complex of social expectations, and that the guest-host relationship could act as a form of contract which suppressed normal behaviour. Such a code of behaviour can create areas of conflicting obligations and expectations, and at times an act of hospitality can fail. So, a key issue to consider is: how far can these various ideas about hospitality be seen to have infiltrated noble attitudes to hospitality?

An event related by Lambert of Ardres engages with many of the issues which have emerged thus far. In his history, Lambert recounts an episode of hospitality which was performed by Count Baldwin of Guines, when he received William, archbishop of Rheims, as a guest.[65] In this episode the count displays to perfection the quality of generosity required in a noble host; but at the same time the account of his behaviour raises some interesting questions about the motivation for such actions, and about the respective power of guests and hosts.

The guest and the host in this incident were both prominent noblemen in their time. William 'of the White Hands', archbishop of Rheims (1176-1202), was the son of Theobald IV of Champagne, and brother to Theobald and Henry the Liberal. He became bishop of Chartres in 1165, and in 1168 assumed the position of archbishop of Sens before assuming his position at Rheims. The interest in literature and learning of William's brother Henry have already been

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[65] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.87, pp.601-2.

established; but William's own connections with men of learning who feature in this study and his role as a patron are worth some consideration before we turn to examine his experience of the hospitality of Count Baldwin.

William's interest in learning is suggested by letters which passed to him from Stephen of Tournai.[66] Some of his learned acquaintances were made during the stay in France of the exiled Thomas Becket (1164-70), including John of Salisbury; and it is known that William was behind John's election to the bishopric of Chartres in 1176.[67] A letter from Nicholas of Clairvaux stated his intention to pay a visit to Rheims;[68] and Walter Map told a story in his *De Nugis Curialium* which was related to him by the archbishop. It was in the same work that Map recounted the hospitality he had received from William's brother, Henry the Liberal, on his trip to Rome for the Third Lateran Council of 1179,[69] explored above.

One of the most interesting figures who can be connected with William was Walter of Châtillon, who dedicated his immensely popular *Alexandreis* to William. Walter was taught by a canon of Beauvais, Master Stephen, and

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[66] One, written to recommend Master Simon (possibly Simon of Tournai) to the archbishop, addresses him thus: 'Graciosum et commendabilem faciunt eum hinc auctoritas morum, hinc pericia litterarum.' Quoted in J.R.Williams, 'William of the White Hands and Men of Letters', *Haskins Anniversary Essays in Medieval History*, ed. C.H.Taylor (Boston, 1929), pp.365-87 (367).

[67] Peter of Celle, 'Epistolae', letter 117, PL 202, 567-8.

[68] Nicholas of Clairvaux, 'Epistolae', letter 57, PL 196, 1652.

[69] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.30, pp.120-23; v.5, pp.450-53. Herman of Tournai also expressed his gratitude for hospitality shown to him, in a sermon addressed to Stephen, archbishop of Vienne, which mentions repayment from God: 'De benignitate, quae me de longinqua regione, id est de urbe Tornaco, quae in finibus Francorum sita, metropolis Flandriae dignoscitur esse, venientem tam hilariter suscipere et vobiscum dignatus estis retinere, non quales debeo, sed quales valeo vestrae paternitati gratias refero, utque ipse pro cujus amore hoc fecistis, vobis Dominus retribuat pro me, ipsius misericordiam exoro': Herman of Tournai, 'Tractatus de incarnatione Jesu Christi domini nostri', PL 180, 9.

studied law in Bologna, and was later granted a prebend at Amiens.[70] Peter Comestor, who was dean of the cathedral of Troyes and later chancellor of Paris, dedicated his *Scholastic History* to the archbishop of Sens.[71] The educated cleric Herbert of Bosham, who served Archbishop Thomas, corresponded with William[72] and dedicated his revision of biblical glosses to him. The theologian Peter of Poitiers dedicated his *Sentences* to the archbishop;[73] and a Latin poem, possibly by Peter Riga, celebrated the promotion of William to his position at Rheims.[74] Other famous names with which William can be connected are Peter Cantor, Master Melior of Pisa (who served at Rheims, and was previously in the service of Count Henry), the learned Master Lombard of Piacenza, and Peter of Blois. William was thus in contact with many prominent twelfth-century figures at the centre of the cultural and intellectual world, and in him the aristocratic, clerical and courtly traditions converge. Correspondingly, the host of the scene described by Lambert, Count Baldwin, whose son was sent to the court of Philip of Flanders for an education in chivalry, was himself renowned for his knowledge of theology.[75]

We now turn to Lambert's account. In the chapter preceding the anecdote about Baldwin's hospitality, Lambert has described the count's grief

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[70] Williams, 'William of the White Hands', p.375.
[71] If Chrétien de Troyes studied at the cathedral schools, he might have encountered Peter Comestor.
[72] Williams, 'William of the White Hands', p.370. A letter from Herbert to Count Henry also survives: Benton, *The Court of Champagne under Henry the Liberal*, pp.212-13.
[73] Peter of Poitiers, 'Sententias', PL 211, 782-1280 (782).
[74] Williams, 'William of the White Hands', p.382.
[75] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', p.598.

and desolation following his wife's death. He then explains in some detail the ways in which Baldwin eventually managed to regain his spirits, becoming a protector and supporter of the unfortunate, including orphans and widows, to the extent that his liberality and cheerfulness were known to knights, priests, abbots, clerics, and many others.[76] Lambert goes on in the next passage to tell us about his hospitable behaviour towards Archbishop William of Rheims precisely in order to give an example of Baldwin's tremendous *largesse* and gaiety.[77]

Lambert begins the chapter by emphasising the plentiful food and drink which are available, such as was appropriate for a man of noble nature to provide; and he dwells in particular on the quality and the abundance of the wine: 'ferculis innumerabilibus ad affluentiam liberaliter appositis et hilariter acceptis, et vino altero et altero, Ciprico et Niseo, pigmentato et clarificato, hic illic per aream in cuppis fluctuante'.[78] In fact, there is so much wine that the men present at the feast ask for water in order that they may moderate their consumption: 'rogantibus Francigenis et postulantibus vivas fontis aquas, ut vini virtutem aliquantisper refrenarent et temperarent'.[79] The servants are

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[76] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.86, p.601.

[77] 'Quod ut omnibus erga omnes et in omnibus exhibitum facilius credatur et veritatis exemplo comprobetur, de uno memorandi nominis hospite, Remorum videlicet archipresule Willelmo, Francorum regis Philippi avunculo, quanta liberalitate et hilaritate eum Ardee hospitem collegerit, et quanto cordis desiderio et humanitatis diligentia ei obsequium prestiterit et suis, aperiamus': Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.86, p.601.

[78] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.87, p.601. On the role of certain foods as symbols of social status see: G.F.Jones, 'The Function of Food in Medieval German Literature', *Speculum*, 35 (1960), pp.78-86.

[79] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.87, p.601. Galbert of Bruges also describes the abundant wine served at Count Charles's residence: *De multro*, c.10. Wine was often mixed with water, for reasons of restraint as well as expense. In fact, undiluted wine was given only to privileged

instructed by the count, however, to place an exceptional wine from Auxerre in the phials and vessels, under the pretence that they contain water, a fact of which the knights and clerics remain ignorant:

> ministri et servientes a pincernis, immo a comite edocti et instructi, in phiolis et in vasculis Authisiodoricum vinum preciosissimum, aquam se afferre mentientes, clericis ignorantibus et militibus omnibusque in gaudio convescentibus, cifis infuderunt.

Yet the truth will out, or in the words of Lambert, 'nichil enim opertum, quod non reveletur', and the archbishop eventually discovers the true nature of the pretended 'water'. Baldwin's hospitality had seemed admirable up to now, and deserving of gratitude, but at this point we see that he risked incurring the ingratitude of the archbishop, by exceeding reasonable measure:

> Quod ut venerabili et pio domine archipresuli tandem innotuit - nichil enim opertum, quod non reveletur - pene gratiam, quam in obsequendo promeruerat fidelis comes et dispensator prudens, liberalitatis et largitatis manu modum excedendo in ingratitudinem commutavit.[80]

Here is another example of how excessive generosity does not invariably secure gratitude. Yet William is reminded that he must endure without complaint, when he recalls the charge of the apostle:

> Sed cum venerabilis pontifex etiam convescens apostolicum ad memoriam eructuaret verbum: Hospitales invicem sine murmuratione,[81] accersito ad se comite, rogavit eum, ut sibi vasculum aque afferret, ut sapiat et, quasi rei nescius, comprehendat aque et puri elementi liquorem.

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guests. On this, and on the superiority of French wines, see B.A.Henisch, *Fast and Feast Food in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1976), esp. p.202.

[80] Lambert of Ardres, 'Historia', c.87, pp.601-2.

[81] 1.*Peter* 4, 9.

So William decides to play along with the game, and asks the count for a glass of this 'water' with the intention of pretending that he still believes it to be the real thing.

However, even though William conforms to the count's wishes, and the noble code of hospitality dictates that one should provide for one's guest and honour him, the count rather surprisingly reacts to William's request by having every such vessel crushed:

> Comes autem, quasi venerandi presulis obtemperans iussionibus, subridens recessit et omnes idrias aquarum, quotquot invenire poterat, ante famulos, pedites et gartiones confregit et pedibus conculcavit et pre gaudio exultatione.

Despite this apparently wanton destruction, joy again remains the overriding emotion. The archbishop accepts his position, and indeed participates in the play-acting, by pretending to be inebriated:

> ut in omnibus hilaris et ob reverentiam et presentiam archipresulis iocundus appareret et iocusus, pueris et ebriis ebrium se simulavit. Venerabilis vero pontifex ex conviva tantam viri et comitis liberalitatem prospiciens et hilaritatem, in voluntate eius omnia quecumque vellet facere promisit.

Thus both guest and host publicly exhibit the joy demanded by the occasion. It would appear that they were well aware of the etiquette of joy specified by contemporary courtesy books: 'Hospitibus laetum debes ostendere vultum; vultus enim laetus dandi duplicat tibi cultum'.[82]

It is worth investigating further the meaning of this insistence on supplying wine, and the apparently wasteful and destructive act of smashing the

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[82] Shroeder (ed.), *Der deutsche Facetus*, 79.

glasses of 'water', in order to understand more about the complexities of hospitality as a social phenomenon. The success of the episode depended on an understanding of the roles which must be played by guest and host, and the reason for the gesture rests on the symbolic function of the wealth and generosity displayed at the event. For here hospitality was clearly an opportunity for public display as well as a matter of honour. The code of generosity and provision enabled Baldwin to posit himself as the ultimate figure of power and wealth by refusing to serve anything inferior to his guest, even regardless of what the guest actually wanted. The use of wealth as a statement of power and status has been discussed earlier in this thesis, in relation to the theme of *largesse*. Likewise, it appears that an act of hospitality provided a similar practical opportunity for a noble to make statements about his social status.

In a culture of honour and reputation, the symbolic value of a physical object such as a gift-horse, or an expensive glass of wine, can sometimes override its material worth,[83] even to the extent that there is a value in the destruction of such objects. In choosing to publicly destroy a source of wealth, an even stronger statement may be made about one's stability of position. A similar custom, named the 'potlatch' by anthropologists, has been observed in

[83] The workmanship of an object, such as the finely-wrought cup in *Cligés,* is also prized above the value of its material components in chivalric romances: Freeman, *The Poetics*, pp.141-56. See also the lengthy description of the cup made by Vulcan in *Floire and Blancheflor*, which depicts in exquisite detail the story of the Greeks, and sports a carbuncle set in the claw of a lifelike eagle: ll.430-497.

tribes of Northwest America.[84] During the winter season, many feasts and festivals take place, and the destruction of wealth at these events acts as a challenge to rival chiefs, and invites them to compete in this 'war' of property.[85] In a similar way, chivalric hospitality becomes to some extent an issue of rank. As Mauss has pointed out, 'even sacrifice to a God is a necessarily reciprocated action';[86] here Baldwin sacrificed wealth and in doing so aimed at an even higher place in the social hierarchy. His grand gesture in crushing the vessels may seem surprisingly antagonistic, and it could have quickly changed the whole tone of the gathering. However, when read within the appropriate social context, it is clear that because the archbishop had asked for the 'water', and the count's concept of hospitality did not allow him to present his honoured guest with anything so elementary, Baldwin was forced to continue the deceit himself by destroying it, proving by this action that nothing but the finest would be offered in his abode.

In Lambert's account, several statements are made about the relative positions of guests and hosts, and it seems that the role of the guest is ultimately one of obedience. It was Baldwin's privilege as the host to act in this way: he played the part to perfection, and his guest was obliged to comply with his chosen method of honouring him, which was by providing him with the best that he had. It is interesting that this vision of the count, as generous provider and cheerful host, was chosen by Lambert of Ardres as a way of honouring the

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[84] Mauss, *The Gift*, pp.5-7.
[85] Mauss, *The Gift*, p.113.
[86] Mauss, *The Gift*, p.16.

memory of Count Baldwin. The account shows how hospitality could be used a means of demonstrating authority, and how a reputation for power and prestige could be created through generous hospitality to fellow nobles. Furthermore the author himself makes comments about the appropriateness of particular actions. While illustrating through Baldwin the qualities of generous provision, and the importance of a joyous countenance, the author also refers to a 'medium', or norm, of hospitality, which Baldwin was at the risk of transgressing. One should not force acts of hospitality upon a guest: the needs of that guest should be considered; and the text hints that offence may be caused otherwise.

Both the archbishop and Count Baldwin brought with them to the count's table certain expectations and assumptions about desirable behaviour. William of Rheims's forbearance was encouraged by a phrase about hospitality from the Bible; and Count Baldwin's actions were informed by an awareness of the importance of generous hospitality, an ethos to which he intended to conform to a high standard. We thus witness a self-consciousness among nobles about how to behave in an act of hospitality, and see ideologies of hospitality working to condition behaviour in a chronicle vision of a real episode. Even if the chronicler chose to emphasise particular aspects of Baldwin's behaviour, it was in order to appeal to an ethos which was evidently recognised and valued among nobles in the twelfth century. A reputation for hospitality mattered.

Another motif which emerges from this episode, and which we have seen above, is the importance of an attitude of joy. Gaiety and affability - or

hilaritas - was indeed seen to be an important feature of a courtier. In his *De officiis*, Cicero emphasised the art of speaking and a positive bearing, and these classical ethics were continued in the medieval period, in the context of life at court.[87] It is worth considering examples of the joyous reception of noblemen at this point, in order to explore further the political implications of hospitable greetings. We have seen that a reverent and friendly greeting characterised the monastic and romance conceptions of the proper reception of a guest. Chronicles likewise show that when a noble returned from a journey, great joy and reverence were shown. On the announcement of his arrival, people would come to greet him joyfully, as in this example recorded by Lambert of Wattrelos, which described the homecoming of Thierry of Flanders in August 1159:

> Die autem prima post beatae Mariae virginis assumptionem Atrebatum Theodericus comes venit, a suis honorifice receptus est cum maxima pompa, plebis clerique tripudio.[88]

Here the relationship between public display and power again comes into play. Thierry is received with 'maximum pomp' and celebration. In *Le Chevalier au Lion* a similar ceremonious atmosphere greets the arrival of King Arthur to a town: people set out to meet him on great Spanish horses, and the townspeople joyously prepare beautiful cloths to spread upon the ground, in anticipation of the distinguished guests. Maidens danced, and instruments sounded:

> Li sain, li cor, et les buisines
> font le chastel si resoner
> que l'en n'oïst pas Deu toner.

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[87] Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, pp.116-7.
[88] Lambert of Wattrelos, 'Annales Cameracenses 1099-1170', ed. G.H.Pertz, MGH SS 16, p.532.

La ou descendent les puceles,
sonent flaütes et vïeles,
tympre, freteles et tabor;
d'autre part refont lor labor
li legier sailleor qui saillent;
trestuit de joie se travaillent,
et a ceste joie reçoivent
lor seignor, si con feire doivent. (ll.2350-60)

Bells, horns, and trumpets made the town reverberate so that God's thunder could not have been heard. There where the maidens danced, they played flutes and pipes, snares, tambourines, and drums; while across the way agile gymnasts performed their tricks. All sought to express their delight, and amidst this joy they welcomed their lord exactly as they should.[89]

The arrival of bishops, royalty, and counts was a festive occasion, and although these examples concern the welcoming of familiar leaders and noblemen, rather than the greeting of strangers, they are nevertheless worth consideration here because of the importance assigned to such welcoming rituals, from the ninth century on into the twelfth century.[90] The welcoming reception of kings and counts, with the rushing forward of townspeople, as seen above, and the hymns and lauds of monks and clerics, was in fact one of several rituals which existed in the twelfth century, and which worked to confirm both the sacred and the political status of a ruler.[91] The romances' portrayal of the welcoming of a nobleman thus reflect a custom which was of no small importance in northern France,[92] and the role of ritual in the positive portrayal

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[89] Kibler, pp.324-5.
[90] The *adventus* grew as a symbol of leadership and dignity: Koziol, *Begging Pardon*, pp.121-2.
[91] Koziol, *Begging Pardon*, pp.84, 114, 117-8, 133-4.
[92] Koziol, *Begging Pardon*, pp.134, 138, 171-2; Vercauteren (ed.), *Actes*, 221; Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.66.

of a leader is shown to be significant.[93] The tradition of the *adventus* thus provides a wider context for the ritual of welcome in acts of hospitality, and again underlines hospitality as a set of conventions by which political and social status may be asserted. The appearance of these behavioural codes in chivalric romances also suggests that rituals which were previously applicable to monarchs have become accessible and meaningful to the rising knightly classes.

Further evidence of the importance which was assigned to hospitality, and instances of rivalry involved in acts of hospitality, may be found in other historical sources. An actual fight over hospitality, resulting in the death of a man, is documented in the early thirteenth-century *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie*, which was one of the earliest vernacular prose histories in France, written by the Anonymous of Béthune. It is worth setting out the context of this episode of hospitality, which is one of political disputes which are then played out in a brawl over a hostel.

The story of the disagreement, which occurs between two noblemen, named in the text as 'Joffrois de Mandeville' and 'Guillaume Bruuiere', is preceded by a description of the bad relations between King John and the father of this Geoffrey of Mandeville, Geoffrey FitzPeter, who had, according to the *Histoire des Ducs*, risen from an obscure knightly family to become the justiciar of England, and who married the countess of Essex, thereby acquiring riches and land. According to the chronicle, the power and wealth of this knight were

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[93] See also G.Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford, 1998).

the reasons for the king's envy of Geoffrey.[94] In fact, we are told that the king had informed the provost of Flanders that he intended to acquire the riches of the justiciar, and that he did indeed succeed in robbing Geoffrey of 10,000 marks.[95] Thus the greed of the king and the enmity between these two men have established a tone of rivalry and injustice before the episode of hospitality occurred.

The incident occurred when Bruuiere and Geoffrey of Mandeville clashed over lodgings. The king was on his way to Marlborough with a band of noblemen, according to the *Histoire des Ducs*, and Geoffrey of Mandeville was also in need of hospitality. Geoffrey sent his *siergans* (servants) ahead to obtain lodgings for himself, a practice which we have seen to have been widespread. The servants found a fine abode, but having entered it they were thrown out by the servants of Guillaume Bruuiere. Guillaume can be identified as William Brewer, a man of humble origins who rose in rank,[96] becoming sheriff of several different counties, and the owner of manors which included Bridgwater in Somerset.[97] The relationship between William and John was an important one, and the sheriff was evidently trusted by the king, and was the recipient of many gifts and favours from him, including a licence to build a castle in Bridgwater.[98] William also assisted Peter des Roches, archbishop of

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[94] *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie et des Rois d'Angleterre*, ed. F.Michel (Paris, 1840), p.115.
[95] *Histoire des Ducs*, p.116.
[96] T.Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, I (London, 1662), p.145.
[97] S.Painter, *The Reign of King John* (Baltimore, 1949), p.71.
[98] Painter, *The Reign of King John*, pp.72-4; J.Kinross, *Discovering Castles in England and Wales* (Aylesbury, 1973), p.154.

Winchester, in the affairs of government when the king was away from England;[99] and he is also mentioned as an executor of the king's will.[100]

In the account of the *Histoire des Ducs*, when Geoffrey of Mandeville arrives at the scene and the servants tell him their story of the lost lodgings, he asks the servants of William to leave 'his' hostel. When they refuse to do so, an argument ensues, which quickly turns into a mêlée in which Geoffrey kills William's most senior sergeant:

> Joffrois vint tantost as siergans Guillaume Bruuiere, si lor requist que il wiudassent son hostel; mais il ne le vaurrent faire: par coi mellée commencha entre eus. Si ocist Joffrois tantost le plus maistre d'aus.[101]

In fear of the king, which was aggravated by the previous enmity with his father, Geoffrey flees. William Brewer goes straight to the king to complain about the act of violence, and the king is very angry on hearing the news and promises to have Geoffrey arrested.

The fugitive wanders for a while, and then calls upon the help of his father-in-law Robert FitzWalter, described in the text as one of the most powerful men in England. Robert, although very displeased by the news, nevertheless protects Geoffrey for the sake of his daughter, and threatens the king that many men will turn up 'in arms' against him if he insists on pursuing Geoffrey.[102] The king fears the wrath of the aggressive Robert, who twice turns

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[99] W.L.Warren, *King John* (London, 1961), pp.217, 222.
[100] Warren, *King John*, p.255.
[101] *Histoire des Ducs*, p.117.
[102] In fact, Robert was one of the chief members of a rebellion against the king, and eventually fled England charged with treason: Warren, *King John*, pp.229-34; J.H.Round, 'King John and Robert FitzWalter', *English Historical Review*, 19 (1904), pp.707-11. Significantly, Robert and

up at the trial of Geoffrey accompanied by 500 armed knights. King John contemplates revenge, and orders that Robert's castle be attacked: thus, we are told, did King John carry out this evil crime, along with many others while he lived: 'cele felenie fist li rois Jehans, ki mainte en fist tant comme il vescui'.[103]

A number of interesting points emerge from this episode. The fight over the hostel occurred because Geoffrey, whose father we have previously been encouraged to sympathise with against the king, clearly believed the lodging to be rightfully his. A good hostel was worth fighting over, and having an appropriate place to stay could clearly be a highly-charged issue for nobles. This episode also shows that an incident of hospitality, which was such an important statement of status and power, could act as an opportunity for the playing out of wider political relationships and disputes.

Further evidence that prestige was an important element of noble hospitality, and that hospitality could act as a way of articulating political conflict, is provided by Gerald of Wales, who evidently shared opinions about the importance of status in his complaints about the restrictions placed on hospitality offered to him. Gerald was involved in disputes about elections and was accused of treason. He informs us that after having complaints from bishop Robert of Bangor, the justiciar Geoffrey FitzPeter sent a letter to the archdeacon of Oxford (Walter Map), recommending that he deprive Gerald of his revenues at Oxford, and made it impossible for Gerald to be harboured at any of the

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William were also involved in a dispute over land ownership: Painter, *The Reign of King John*, p.76.

[103] *Histoire des Ducs*, p.119.

Cistercian abbeys in Wales.[104] Warnings were even sent stating that the abbeys would be seized if this command was ignored, and if they attempted to serve Gerald in any way.

As a result of the ambitions of the abbot of Whitland, Gerald was banned from being received in the manner appropriate to his status:

> Abbas etiam idem ambitione caecus et excaecatus, quoniam receptionem penitus archidiacono interdicere non potuit, per abbatias domui suae subjectas, praesertim etiam apud Stratam Floridam, ubi thesaurum librorum suorum congesserat, et ubi urgente fortius persecutionis articulo frequentius se contulerat, statuendo praecepit, quatinus honor ei cum adventaret vel archidiaconi vel electi non exhiberetur; sed tantum in aula publica inter hospites communes et strepitum popularem locaretur.[105]
>
> Likewise the same Abbot, blinded by ambition, since he could not utterly forbid the archdeacon from being received, sent a decree through all the Abbeys subject to his house, more especially to Strathflur, where Giraldus had stored his treasured books and whither he had most often betaken himself in the hour of violent persecution, that when he came thither he should not receive the honour due to the Archdeacon or the Elect, but should only be harboured in the public hall among the common guests and the noise of the people.

In addition, the abbot forbade that Gerald be escorted by either a monk, brother, or servant in unknown places. By sending out such a decree, the abbot was restricting Gerald's political influence and also degrading him socially.

The right to provide hospitality is also a source of competition in chivalric romances, as exemplified by an argument in *Erec et Enide* over who

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[104] Gerald of Wales, *De Iure et Statu Menevensis Ecclesiae*, *Opera*, 3, ed. J.S.Brewer, Dist.iii, pp.200-203; Butler, *Autobiography*, p.226.
[105] Gerald of Wales, *De Iure et Statu*, pp.201-2; Butler, *Autobiography*, p.226.

will host Erec. King Evrain has forbidden others to provide hospitality to visiting noblemen, wishing to have the honour all to himself:

> alons: nostre ostex i est pris,
> ce ai oï dire et conter,
> ne puet an ce chaastel antrer,
> por ce que herbergier i vuelle,
> que li rois Evrains nel recuelle;
> tant est gentix et frans li rois
> qu'il a fet ban a ses borjois,
> si chier con chascuns a son cors,
> que prodom qui veigne de hors
> an lor meisons ostel ne truisse,
> por ce que il meïsmes puisse
> toz les prodomes enorer
> qui leanz voldront demorer. (ll.5431-44)
>
> That is where we will take our lodgings, for no highly reputed knight - so I have heard tell - can enter the town in search of lodging without being welcomed by King Evrain. The king is so noble and gracious that he has made a proclamation to his burghers that, if they value their lives, no nobleman who comes from outside must find lodging in their houses, so that he himself may honour all the noblemen who want to stay in the town.[106]

Yet by establishing a monopoly on hospitality the king, like Count Baldwin, is not keeping strictly to the ideal of hospitality, according to which guests should have some power of choice as to whether to accept proffered lodgings or provisions. Hospitality seems to be used here as a tool which expresses the king's authority, and as a statement of power, rather than simply originating from a desire to provide comfort to knights in need, spontaneously and without thought of reputation or other benefits.

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[106] Kibler, p.104.

Further evidence of the importance of providing hospitality in the proper manner, via an example of a host's failure, is found in a story in Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*. The failure of a hostess to project the friendly and celebratory atmosphere which should accompany an act of hospitality, and the consequences of this, are described in the following story. A married couple have had a guest staying in their house, and on the second day, when the husband has gone out, the woman breaks with the Welsh tradition of open hospitality and of polite and unintrusive behaviour towards guests. For when the guest makes a comment about the bad weather, the hostess replies that it is 'a good day for a fool to dawdle in a wise man's house' (Modo facit bonum perhendinare ignauo uiro in domo sapientis').[107] On returning to the house and discovering that their guest has been driven away in anger at this uncourteous remark, the host runs his wife through with his sword and then rushes to find his guest, whom he discovers has fallen victim to a wolf.

We are told in conclusion that a feud ensued between the family of the guest and the family of the host, whose eternal shame is due to the wife's bad words ('ob causam facte suspicionis per uerbum uxoris inuide'). This passage suggests that a guest deserves the respect and protection of his host, and that an act of hospitality should not be made with conditions. In fact, according to chivalric romances, even when the guest turns out to be an enemy, the host is still obliged to honour him. In *L'Atre Périlleux*, Escanor reminds his host of the 'treason' of which he would be held guilty were he to persist in enforcing

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[107] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ii.21, pp.184-5.

restrictions upon him, for he had accepted the lodgings in good faith. His statement is recognised as a valid one by the host:

> - Sire, ce dist le chevalier,
> Ce est drois et fine raison
> Que vous gardés de traïson,
> Que vous en seriiés retés
> Se de rien i ere grevés
> Par vous ne par vostre seü.
> Se g'i avoie mal eü,
> Vilenie ni enconbrier,
> Vous en ariés reprovier
> A tox les jors de vostre vie.'
> Et li sire la li otrie,
> Et li dist qu'il soit aseür,
> Que, si c'estoit le roi Artur,
> Ne li consentiroit il mie
> Que il li feïst vilenie
> Tant com il fust en son castel. (ll.1844-59)

> 'My lord,' said the knight, 'it is right and proper for you to avoid treason. You would be blamed for it if I were harmed by you or with your knowledge. If I should be insulted or mistreated here you would be reproached for it all the days of your life.' Then the lord agreed with him and told him to rest assured that he would not allow anyone, not even King Arthur, to do him any harm as long as he was in his castle.[108]

The guest deserves protection in his status as guest, if nothing else. Again, hospitality is seen to suspend normal relations.

A similar situation occurs in the *Conte du Graal*, when the townspeople are attempting to break through to Gawain, who is accused of treason. Gawain's host is 'completely dumbfounded' on arriving back to witness such violence, and is reminded by the very knight who originally accused Gawain that to allow such behaviour toward a guest is shameful:

> S'il nel conperent et achatent,

[108] Kibler, p.134.

ge vos an savroie mal gré.
J'avoie Gauvain apelé
de traïson, bien le savez,
et ce est il que vos avez
fet herbergier an voz meisons.
Si seroit bien droiz et reisons,
qant vos vostre oste en avez fet,
que ja n'i ait honte ne let. (ll.5860-8)

If they are not compelled to make amends and pay for it, I'll never respect you again. I had charged Gawain with treason, as you well recall, and it is he whom you are lodging in your house; yet it is right and proper, since you have made him your guest, that he should not be shamed or dishonoured.[109]

The king agrees that 'for honour's sake' he will protect Gawain from any injury, as he was the one who offered him lodging. Again ideas of a contractual obligation may be applied to hospitality. Overall, then, both the romances and Walter Map's story show that once one has taken in a guest, one is bound to ensure his comfort and happiness, in this case by suspending personal and political animosity.

The importance of providing suitable lodgings and of honouring one's role as a host have been considered; but when hospitality is refused, it is sometimes for honourable reasons. A positive experience of hospitality depends on the ability of each party to anticipate the needs of the other: to merely carry out the rules of hospitality is not always sufficient. The relationship between guest and host can thus be a delicate one, and it seems that a successful incident of hospitality is one in which both parties are aware of the needs of the other.

[109] Kibler, p.455.

There is a sense that one must be careful to comply with the bounds of reasonable hospitality, and not force one's own desires forward.

So, while the refusal to provide hospitality may cause offence and place a guest in difficulties, as we shall see, still any offer must be made with regard to the sense of honour and decorum characteristic of the guest-host relationship. Inappropriately excessive attempts to provide hospitality are chastised in the *Chevalier de la Charrete*, which tells of the competitiveness of the people of Logres who wish to provide hospitality to Lancelot. Each claims that their lodging is the best, entreating Lancelot to stay with them: 'Crowding about him they were all saying this and trying to pull him away from the others, because each wanted to host him; they nearly came to blows'.[110] The rule that one should offer hospitality generously is thus taken to an extreme and Lancelot, although grateful to them all for their intentions, reminds the people of the true nature of hospitality, and that they should be offering accommodation according to criteria which will ensure that the most honour comes to the parties involved.

In chivalric romances, a refusal to provide hospitality can signal a host's failure to respect the guest in the proper manner. Some romances highlight the rudeness of hosts in their failing to provide hospitality for worthy knights. For instance, in the romance of *Yder*, the protagonist and a maiden, in need of shelter, arrive at a fortified house. Yder finds stables with food but no horses, and a fire burning in the hall, but receives no reception and, feeling somewhat disconcerted, keeps the saddle on his horse in case he should wish to make an

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[110] *Conte du Graal*, ll.2437-55; Kibler, pp.237-8.

escape.[111] Indeed, the sense of apprehension surrounding this episode turns out to be justified. The customary welcome and honour shown to an arriving guest are sorely lacking: Yder approaches a dwarf, and addresses him twice; he is ignored, and so sits himself down and pokes the fire on which the dwarf is cooking food. The dwarf calls Yder a brigand, and his maiden a whore, and accuses him of gluttony in attempting to handle the food.

When asked to leave by the master of the house, who has been told by his dwarf that Yder is a dangerous knight, Yder is anxious should he have to leave the house to be in the wood on a dark night: 'Mult le poise s'il l'ostel leit/ Por estre el bois par nuit oscure' (ll.3967-8). Yder is innocent, and should be entitled to hospitality: 'En Yder n'ot onques forfeit' (l.3966). He tells the would-be host that it is 'shameful for a knight to turn another from his house'.[112] Yder is a courtly knight clearly deserving of hospitality.

Many knights refused accommodation in the romances lay the blame at the feet of the host, and the dangers to which unlodged knights are exposed are often mentioned. Thus, in *L'Atre Périlleux* when Gawain is forced to spend the night outdoors, he experiences an uncomfortable night with no food or drink, and no soft bed, and as a consequence suffers greatly (ll.2773-821). In Chrétien's romances, the portrayal of nature as a hostile environment is striking, and it often represents a negative opposition to the civilised and

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[111] Adams (ed.), *Yder*, ll.3809-23, pp.146-9.
[112] *L'Atre Périlleux*, ed. Woledge, ll.3976-9; Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, pp.152-3.

hospitable environment of the court.[113] This portrayal would presumably have struck a chord with the audience of romances, who faced real dangers of their own when travelling. So hospitality at the court provides, in theory, a secure and comfortable environment for a knight which, according to romances, caters for all his needs: needs which are social as well as material. Yet political factors were also a determining factor in the provision of hospitality, as illustrated in the examples of acts of hospitality in chronicles and chivalric romances.

4.iii A Virtue of Nobles

This section considers in detail the conflicts created by the changing meanings of hospitality, as it moved away from religious notions of charity, and towards a more secular set of values. A useful way in which to begin studying the secularisation of hospitality, is by considering how much importance is placed on the identity and status of the guest being received. This will be done by comparing examples of conflicts over the appropriate level of simplicity or lavishness of hospitality being bestowed, and the motivations of a host in taking in a guest. The problem of the expense which accompanied acts of hospitality will also be considered, along with references to payment for hospitality, which are particularly important as indicators of changing attitudes to hospitality.

The ideologies of hospitality explored above have shown that a stranger in need of lodgings should be taken in and treated with generosity and honour, regardless of his identity. For instance, Gerald of Wales emphasised the bounty

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[113] Putter, *Sir Gawain*, pp.10-50.

of the Welsh precisely by drawing attention to their unquestioning provision of acts of hospitality:

> Nemo in hac gente mendicus. Omnium enim hospitia omnibus sunt communia. Largitatem quippe, et praecipue dapsilitatem, cunctis virtutibus anteponunt. Adeo nempe hospitalis hic gratia communione laetatur, quod itinerantibus ea nec offeratur nec petatur. Tantum etenim, domum intrantes, protinus arma custodiae tradunt.
>
> In Wales no one begs. Everyone's home is open to all, for the Welsh generosity and hospitality are the greatest of all virtues. They very much enjoy welcoming others to their homes. When you travel there is no question of your asking for accommodation or of their offering it: you just march into a house and hand over your weapons to the person in charge.[114]

This model of Welsh hospitality is echoed by Walter Map, who also talks of their liberal hospitality: 'tanta retinent uerecundia largitatis et hospitalitatis reuerenciam'. In fact he promotes a very positive image of the willing host when he tells us that the Welsh refuse to ask a guest any of his personal details until the third day of his stay:

> Et ne redargui possint auaricie, tanta retinent uerecundia largitatis et hospitalitatis reuerenciam, ut ante diem tercium nemo querat ab hospite suscepto unde sit uel quis, ne unquam erubescat uel de licencia uiolenta suspicionem habeat a susceptore, uel oporteat ipsum ad uocacionem respondere, ut tutus sedeat ab improperio.
>
> To escape the reproach of miserliness they so punctually observe respect for generosity and hospitality that before the third day no one will ask a guest whom he has taken in, who or whence he is, lest he should be put to shame or seem to be suspected by his entertainer of taking forcible liberties; nor need he answer any call, so that he may rest free from reproach.[115]

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[114] Gerald of Wales, 'Descriptio Kambriae', I.10; Thorpe (trans.), *The Description of Wales,* pp.236-7.
[115] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ii.20, pp.182-3.

Often in romances, too, a guest-knight will not disclose his identity. The passage from Map implies that a guest's status should not make a material difference to his treatment. While these models of Welsh hospitality share many of the notions of the correct behaviour of a host with other texts, including the notion of liberality to which Count Baldwin adhered so closely, the tone of the text, with its nostalgic description of the charming simplicity and openness of rustic arrangements, also suggests a concern that such attitudes are no longer the norm.

An important source of possible conflict was the problem of effective control. In fact, despite his own complaints about the inhospitable Welsh wife, seen earlier, whose ungracious comment led to the death of her guest, the cost and inconvenience of hospitality was a concern to Walter Map in his own life. When describing his own household in *De Nugis Curialium*, Walter Map complained of the antics of his scrounging servants who, he claims, forced him into involuntary acts of hospitality by going into the streets and inviting people into his house. The custom of hospitality necessitated that he would then have to provide for them, and the servants would then partake of their master's bounty. All along they claimed to be doing this for the sake of his reputation, and to counteract rumours of stinginess:

> Hiis dictis consilium inierunt crudele satis. Exibant in uicos et plateas, et se missos a me fatebantur, ut compellerent errantes intrare.[116] Qui domi erant mecum ipsos cum multa ueneracione suscipiebant, dicentes me nimis eos desiderare, frequenterque uenire precabantur. Ad me uero currentes nunciabant hospites uiros uenerabiles adesse, cogebantque congratulari nolentem.

[116] Cf. *Luke* 14: 21,23.

> After this they hit on a plan which was really very hard on me. They would go into the streets and lanes and say I had sent them to compel travellers to come in. The servants in the house received the guests with the greatest respect, said that I was most anxious to see them, and hoped they would come often. Then they would run in to me and announce that guests had arrived, men of good position, and made me welcome them, in no wise desiring to do so.[117]

Reputation is again a factor in the provision of hospitality: in this case the servants are able to use it as an excuse for receiving bounty themselves: 'Then they made meat and drink fly ... with the result that everything was squandered'. Returning home from church, Walter complains, he would find 'a huge fire, and the guests of yesterday (who I hoped had gone) drawn up around it'.[118] His servants would advise him to err on the side of generosity, claiming that 'fortune favours the brave' (audaces Fortuna iuuat)[119] and that he should 'throw the handle after the axe' ('Iacta manubrium post securim'). They even try to appeal to his political vanities by telling him that it is rumoured that he will be made a bishop. Disposing of wealth in order to secure status and reputation is once again seen to be expedient.

In this way, Walter feared, his servants were set to ruin him.[120] One might argue that by complaining thus, he is not acting so differently to the rude

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[117] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.10, pp.20-23.
[118] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.19, pp.22-3.
[119] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.22-3; Virgil, *The Aeneid*, ed. R.D.Williams (Basingstoke, 1973), X, 284.
[120] Walter also tells a cautionary story of a hermit who took into his abode a hungry snake, and fed it according to his (mis)understanding of biblical precepts regarding the generous provision of food (*Romans* 10:2; *Luke* 6:30; *Matt* 15:27). Eventually the snake became so big that his 'guest' filled the entire cell, and the hermit was only saved by penitence. Thus, we are told, he learned the lesson of 'charity foolishly lavished': *De Nugis Curialium*, dist.ii,c.6, pp.140-1.

Welsh hostess of his own anecdote, whose fault so clearly lay in her suggestion to a guest on his second day that he was 'dawdling' in his host's house. Yet Walter is not necessarily miserly: his account of his servants' expenditure highlights the pressures of a reputation for hospitality, and the problems caused by it, which included expenditure.

A further issue to address is therefore that of cost, another potential source of conflict. According to its ideological traditions, hospitality should be provided freely. In chivalric romances ideas of charity are transformed into a symbolic code of honour, and the meeting of traditional codes of hospitality with the secular world in the twelfth century is reflected in references to payment for hospitality in chivalric romances. So, we need to ask: what is the nature of such references; and do they give a different shade of meaning to this supposedly free virtue?

A preliminary point worthy of emphasis is that in romances, payment takes a variety of forms, from 'payment' in kind, to literal payment using money. A return for hospitality may be made in the gift of a horse, or in the granting of a small boon, such as the guest revealing his identity to his host.[121] A guest may play a more substantial role, by fighting to protect his host from a feared enemy, as is the case in the *Conte du Graal* (l.2162). In *Erec et Enide*, the vavasour who was generous to the hero by providing him with hospitality

[121] For example, *Yder*, l.4863.

receives ample repayment when Erec gives him land and castles (ll.1306-36, p.53).[122]

Sometimes a knight's 'repayment' takes the form of the knight being asked to stay longer, or to return later to the same dwelling (for example, *Erec et Enide*, ll.4258-61), and this return may be described as an 'obligation' or a 'gift'. It is presented as an obligation of honour and a form of repayment in this example from *Le Chevalier au Lion*, when Calogrenant recalls the hospitality he received from a vavasour while on adventure:

> Aprés me repria que gié
> par son ostel m'an revenisse
> an guerredon et an servise,
> et je li dis: "Voluntiers, sire",
> que honte fust de l'escondire;
> petit por mon oste feïse
> se cest don li escondeïse. (ll.260-66)
>
> Then he besought me to accord him the service and recompense of returning by way of his lodging; I responded "Willingly, sir." For it would have been a shame to refuse him; I would have seemed ungrateful had I refused my host this boon.[123]

It is courtly in a romance for a knight to be implored to stay, but usually he will refuse the offer and be on his way.[124] Yet sometimes he is not given a choice, but is forced to remain against his will, and to perform an enforced service for his host by fighting his enemies. In *Le Chevalier au Lion*, in the episode of Pesme Avanture, which is full of foreboding, we are told of knights who 'pay

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[122] A desire to repay an act of hospitality is also expressed by Gawain in *L'Atre Périlleux*, who hopes that God will allow him to do so: ll.2026-31; Arthur (trans.), *Three Arthurian Romances*, p.137; see also *Yder*, ll.804-11.
[123] Kibler, p.298.
[124] *Conte du Graal*, l.2162.

very dearly for their lodgings'; and the hero himself is not allowed to leave but is forced to fight the enemy (ll.5510ff). This is a wrongful action, for the host is making an offer of hospitality as a means of securing future benefits, against the knowledge of his guest.

The inappropriate behaviour of the host is compounded when Yvain has defeated their enemy, and is almost forced to take the host's daughter as his wife. He causes great offence by refusing to do so and is sent on his way by the angry father.[125] Here the status of Yvain as a guest, with the consequent need to show gratitude and obeisance to his host, place him in a difficult situation, as Count Baldwin's excessive offerings of wine did William of Rheims. Issues of cost and motivation are again brought to the fore in these examples, which show that hosts can spend too much on, or demand too much from, their guests.

Clearly the issue of obligation was at the forefront of noble consciences, and chivalric romances can express the relationship of obligation in even more blunt terms. In *L'Atre Périlleux*, the morning after his sojourn in the wild, Gawain is discovered by a knight who offers him hospitality. As we saw above, he is granted the 'favour' on condition that he will provide a return in the future, and is requested to give the sparrowhawk to the knight as a token or 'gueredon' of this debt (ll.2892-95). Such references as these contrast with those offers of future 'repayment' made freely by guest-knights in grateful recognition of the honour which has been shown to them through an act of hospitality. The freedom of a guest is a part of hospitality, and these hosts are

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[125] *Le Chevalier au Lion*, l.5820.

wrongfully detaining their guests for their own personal benefit, or turning hospitality into a matter of money, and thus they are going against the idea of hospitality as a form of voluntary generosity.

This point is emphasised in chivalric romances by means of episodes in which demands for payment are made. While chivalric romances promote the idea of hospitality as a symbolic 'debt' which may be settled in a number of ways, and something subtle and voluntary, an actual *demand* for payment is usually described as uncourteous and can cause offence. Thus, in the *Chevalier de la Charrete*, Lancelot is put in a compromising position when he is told by his hostess that he may have lodgings on the condition that he sleeps with her.[126] Another demand for payment occurs in *Fergus of Galloway*, which was written by Guillaume le Clerc around the turn of the twelfth century. This romance was greatly influenced by Chrétien's works.[127] It appears alongside *L'Atre Périlleux* and the *Perlesvaus* in one manuscript, and was probably written in Northern France. The hero Fergus comes across a group of fifteen men in the forest and, without greeting them, begins to help himself to their food. The chief, in what is called 'perverse courtliness', tells his companions to

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[126] *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, ll.943-1266; Kibler, p.219. It is interesting that the *Vita Prima Bernardi* records a similar problem for Saint Bernard. In his youth Bernard was the guest at the house of a married woman, who was attracted by him, and made sure that he had a bed that was separated from the others in his company. At night, the woman crept into his bed, and Bernard called out 'Thief!', in order to raise attention and frighten the woman away. Twice more she tried to entice Bernard to receive her advances, but each time Bernard cried out the same message. The next day, Bernard's companions asked him about his dream, and he told them 'there really was a thief, and it was our hostess, who was trying to steal something very precious to me', meaning his chastity. Although the story is presumably concerned more with exemplifying Bernard's powers of resistance, it is worth considering the idea that Bernard is being cast in a similar model as a hero of romance: William of St.Thierry, 'Vita Prima Bernardi', 230-1; *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Webb and Walker, pp.21-2.

[127] Guillaume le Clerc, *Fergus*, ed. Frescoln.

let the knight eat as much as he wants, for he will surely 'settle his account' before he leaves. Fergus, beginning his second loaf, becomes indignant at such a statement. He regrets that he is not being allowed to finish eating before having to pay, but says that he would be happy to offer a fine silk tunic to this purpose (ll.3342-53). The men desire his armour and weapons, however - the full benefit of which they certainly receive when Fergus 'proffers them his sword' and defeats them (ll.3354-85). In this case, it is not Fergus's freedoms which are criticised, but the uncourteous demand for payment and the failure to provide hospitality in good faith according to the noble code. Here the forest men can be seen to represent a mercenary attitude from which the romances generally try to alienate their heroes, as we have seen, while Fergus represents the chivalric quality of free hospitality even despite his seemingly rude actions. The moral of this story, then, is that hospitality is essentially a symbolic activity, and is closely related to a system of honour which does not fit with commercial values.

This is reflected in the term 'ostel', which was originally semantically interchangeable with words meaning 'home' and 'house', and lacked the sense of a profit-making establishment.[128] In chivalric romances, this enjoys particular emphasis in the willingness to freely provide hospitality, and the idea that one is honoured by entertaining a noble guest. Ideally a nobleman will offer lodgings without being asked, as in the example of Erec and the vavasour, and

[128] Oschinsky, *Der Ritter unterwegs*, pp.18-20.

in the following offer made to Lancelot by a vavasour who has been out hunting:

> Li vavasors molt tost errant
> vient ancontre le chevalier,
> si le prie de herbergier:
> "Sire, fet il, nuiz iert par tans,
> sel devez feire par reison;
> et j'ai une moie meison
> ci pres, ou ge vos manrai ja.
> Einz nus mialz ne vos herberja
> lonc mon pooir que je ferai,
> s'il vos plest et liez an serai."
>
> This vavasour rode swiftly up to the knight and prayed him to accept lodging. 'Sir,' said he, 'it will soon be night and is already past the time when it is reasonable to think of lodging. I have a manor house nearby where I will take you. I will do my best to lodge you better than you've ever been lodged before. I'll be happy if you'll accept.[129]

When the knight accepts gladly, the vavasour sends his son ahead to prepare the house and the meal.

Another indication of the social loading of hospitality emerges from the fact that taverns do not feature in chivalric romances. Taverns in fact had a reputation for being dangerous places of ill-repute; for instance, Louis IX warned against such places.[130] The knights of romances thus again avoid bourgeois connections, and the portrayal of hospitality enhances the sense of their nobility and the exclusiveness of their social identity. Once, in the *Conte du Graal*, Lancelot takes lodgings in a tavern in order to conceal his identity, but we are told that never before had a knight as noble as he gone to such poor

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[129] *Chevalier de la Charrete*, ll.2022-32, p.232.
[130] Oschinksy, *Der Ritter unterwegs*, 19,23-4; see also Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p.134.

lodgings: 'Einz si prodom n'ot mes itel/ car molt estoit petiz et bas' (ll.5508-9). The narrow bed with its coarse covers clearly do not match the usual standard of accommodation to which such a nobleman is accustomed.

The ways in which noble hospitality defined itself is of great importance, and the 'economy' of hospitality in romances relies on an understanding of the duty to provide hospitality to a fellow noble. Even when the host is in poverty, according to the ideology of hospitality he must readily provide all that he can for a guest: in the *Conte du Graal*, Perceval is received by a thin, pale maiden and let into a very poor town, where he is warned that the hospitality they can offer does not befit a gentleman, but that they will provide what they can if he will settle for it.[131] Yet most acts of hospitality occur between nobles, thus reinforcing the sense of consolidation of a social group through a social code. In *Erec et Enide*, when the count learns of Erec's identity, he offers his noble lodgings to the hero, stating that Erec, as the son of King Lac, 'ought rightfully' to take lodgings with him.[132] The count suggests by this that a certain high standard of hospitality is appropriate for knights of a certain status; Erec, however, demonstrates his gratitude to his host the vavasour, by insisting on remaining with him.

Aristocratic hospitality, in its distance from commercial transactions, might be compared with other social practices in which knights were exempt

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[131] *Conte du Graal*, ll.1729-32; Kibler, p.403.
[132] *Erec et Enide*, ll.666-73; Kibler, p.53.

from charges. One example is the payment of tolls.[133] There were numerous toll stations to be encountered by travellers on the northern French roads in the thirteenth century, many of which probably dated back to the twelfth.[134] Significantly knights were exempt from paying some taxes,[135] and we may see in the chivalric romances an attempt to support knights' rights. Although forms of payment are mentioned, as we have seen, toll is rarely levied in romances, and when it is demanded from knights, it can cause a great deal of offence. The demand of tolls from knights was presented as an abomination, and as a consequence such payments are seen as extortion. *Fergus of Galloway* is interesting in this respect. When the protagonist's horse is demanded as payment of a toll (l.3153), Fergus responds to this by making 'payment' with his sword.[136] The references to toll and payment are ironic, as we saw with the term 'gift' in the previous chapter. So it is that Fergus makes metaphorical 'payments' of tolls by means of his sword rather than his purse, and knightly values are championed.[137]

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[133] See, for example, the arguments over toll in the *Coutumes* of Philippe de Beaumanoir, trans. Akehurst, p.316; also Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller,* p.112; Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.55, c.88, c.95; Ross (trans.), pp.203-6, 260-1, 283-5.

[134] The various taxes to which traders were subjected are also reflected in *Guillaume d'Angleterre*: see Chapter Three.

[135] Those in the king's service were exempt from paying toutes or tailles: Philippe de Beaumanoir, *Coutumes*, trans. Akehurst, p.548; G.-B.Depping, *Réglemens sur les Arts et Métiers de Paris* (Paris, 1837), p.280f. While lords possessed the right to demand such taxes, and tolls were a fact of life, they were to some extent negotiable, and could be suspended. Philip of Alsace granted exemption to the new towns of his foundation, in order to support them. For more on general taxes and tolls, see Baldwin, *Masters*; M.M.Postan, E.E.Rich and E.Miller (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, II: *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*; III: *Economic Organisation and Policies in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1952-63).

[136] Guillaume le Clerc, *Fergus*, l.3240.

[137] In *Le Chevalier au Lion*, the villainy of extortion takes the form of the 'wicked and devilish custom' at the town of Pesme Adventure, by means of which hundreds of poor maidens in worn-out dresses, half-starved, and miserable, are forced to create silk work, and are paid 4 pennies for

So noble hospitality, like *largesse*, was a virtue which distinguished knights. An exemplum of Jacques de Vitry, set in the marketplace of Champagne,[138] mirrors this attitude and emphasises the difference between noble hospitality, which is a system of reciprocation, and the hospitality of other social groups, such as the bourgeois, which revolves more directly around money. In this story, a guest is forced to stay longer at a dwelling in order that he will give more money to his host. Here it is not honour or gratitude which detains the guest, but fear. When his guest, a rich merchant from Provence, is due to leave, the host emits a sound from his swollen stomach ('cum inflata vesica sonum emisit'), and this is described as an 'ill omen'. In fact every time the guest wishes to leave, the host repeats his act, and this goes on for fifteen days until other visitors arrive. The host's concerns rest with the money he can amass, and his attitude jars with the chivalric romances' portrayal of noble hospitality.

So ideas about hospitality are reflective of different social relationships. Knights do pay for lodgings by means of cash or horses: in *Erec et Enide*, the evil count offers to pay Erec's expenses, but the hero replies that he has plenty of resources, and when he leaves he volunteers payment to his host (a burgher)

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what is worth 240 pence. Opinions as to the social realism of this episode vary, with some critics believing that this episode gives a clear insight into real economic conditions in the region at the time of the romance. For an appraisal of the economic realities of this scene, including the possible influence of Sicilian and Muslim societies, see R.A.Hall, 'The Silk Factory in Chrestien de Troyes's *Yvain*', *Modern Language Notes*, 56 (1941), pp.418-22. Carasso-Bulow interprets this scene as an instance of the 'merveilleux': *The Merveilleux*, esp. pp.127-8, 139-42.

[138] G.Frenken (ed.), *Die Exempla des Jacob von Vitry* (Munich, 1914), no.34, p.115.

in the form of seven horses.[139] Booty from tournaments may also be used to pay for hospitality.[140] But the romances make a distinction between forms of hospitality between nobles, and methods of payment expected by other members of society. The chivalric virtue of hospitality is distinguished as a system of reciprocation, and a product of the chivalric classes, in which specifically commercial ties are avoided. The distinction here is that the bourgeoisie are paid with money for hospitality, but between nobles the code of hospitality is a contract, and one by which the nobility can define itself in opposition to other social groups.

It is worth noting that other forms of payment for hospitality existed in real life, including the gift of poetry. For example, Boiuin de Provins received three nights' lodging and ten sous for reciting a story to the family and friends of the provost of Provins; and Johan the Chaplain recited to his host in return for hospitality, 'as is the custom in Normandy'.[141] A retrospective non-monetary 'payment' for hospitality was made to the canons of Saint-Loup by Marie of Champagne, wife of Count Henry the Liberal. The count's knights had inappropriately stayed with men who had been exempted from the feudal duty

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[139] ll.3269-74, p.77; ll.3498-504, p.80. In the *Conte du Graal*, Gawain mentions using his money to pay for resources and lodgings (ll.5290-5, p.446).

[140] Oschinksy, *Der Ritter unterwegs*, p.33.

[141] Philippe de Rémi (d.1266), father of the jurist Philippe de Beaumanoir, is believed to have written fabliaux, as well as the romances *La Manekine* and *Jehan et Blonde*: T.B.W.Reid (ed.), *Twelve Fabliaux* (Manchester, 1958), pp.7-8; L.C.Brook, 'The Optimistic Love-Poet: Philippe de Beaumanoir', *The Court and Cultural Diversity*, ed. Mullally and Thomson, pp.197-206. A genre often ignored, on account of their 'bourgeois' tone, the fabliaux can in fact be connected with aristocratic circles; and many were produced in the northern provinces, and involve a similar mix of noble and merchant societies as that witnessed in *Guillaume d'Angleterre* in the previous chapter. Recall also the tribute to the abbess by Garnier, for the hospitality he received, in 'return' for which he wrote his work on Becket. For more on the fabliaux, see P.Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux* (Copenhagen, 1957).

to provide *gistum*; and consequently Marie attached her ring to a bible which was given to the church of Saint-Loup in recognition of the mistake.[142]

So, class status and money do affect attitudes to hospitality. According to traditions of hospitality, a host will behave politely towards his guest on principle, for 'a man is a fool to receive a noble man and not show him honour' ('que fos est qui prodome atret/ entor lui, s'enor ne li fet': *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ll.3877-8). Yet the idea of a host hoping to benefit from acts of hospitality is indeed not uncommon, even in chivalric romances: in *Yder*, the hero's hostess also expresses her desire to provide hospitality, in the knowledge that she will receive greater benefits.[143] In other texts, too, it is not unknown for a host to receive a material benefit for providing hospitality.[144]

Regardless of the ideology of free and indiscriminate hospitality, anxieties about economics and social status often come to the surface in secular accounts. Further evidence of the exclusive nature of aristocratic hospitality, and how it conferred status on guests and hosts, is provided by the concerns of Philip de Barri, the brother of Gerald of Wales, about the nature of the hospitality he was providing. Philip gave hospitality to many travellers, a majority of whom were rich, and he was anxious that his hospitality towards

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[142] M.Vernier, 'Les Officiers laïques de l'abbaye de Saint-Loup', *Bulletin historique et philologique*, 1904, pp.253-69; Putter, 'Knights and Clerics', pp.254-5.
[143] Adams (ed.), *Yder*, ll.634-5.
[144] A story by Walter Map tells of the granting of hospitality to King Aethelred by a cowherd's son, Godwine, who, although not knowing that he received the king, ran forward and pulled off the lord's boots, tended his horse, and then provided him with food in excess of the commands of his father. Walter emphasises that the boy did not do this 'for gain and profit, and thus unawares slipped into both profit and gain'. The king adopted the boy, and made him a knight and earl of Gloucester : *De Nugis Curialium*, v.3, pp.412-5.

them may not be considered 'worthy' in the eyes of God. In his concern he consulted the Roman curia, through Gerald, about the matter. The letter of response, which follows, engages with the question of the uneasy relationship of money and class with hospitality, and is worth quoting at length:

> As we have learned that you are pricked with doubt as to whether alms given to the rich acquire as much merit as those bestowed upon the poor, I will reply to you in accordance with the words of St.John Crysostum, that if the rich seek hospitality, no inquiry should be made concerning them. For if Abraham had made anxious inquiry concerning those who sought his hospitality, assuredly he would not have received the angels in his dwelling, but would have driven them away, it may be, with other persons as well. Therefore, inspired by consideration of his example, I tell you that you should bestow the works of hospitality and charity on rich and poor alike. For God will not reward you according to the persons whom you receive, but recompense is prepared for the giver according to his sincere intent, his pity and his kindness.[145]

The letter reassures Philip that his acts of hospitality to the rich do indeed 'count', and that hospitality should be provided to both rich and poor (note again the reference to Abraham's act of hospitality to his anonymous 'guests'). The emphasis on the expectation of return from God is nevertheless interesting, and Gerald writes that Philip would continue providing hospitality to the rich, if

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[145] The Latin is given here on account of its length: 'Sicut veridica relatione didicimus, scrupulus dubitationis emersit et vobis haesitationis occasio emanavit, utrum eleemosyna divitibus tradita tantum meritum habeat quantum si esset pauperibus erogata [...] quantum igitur potest humana fragilitas Johannis os aurei adhaerentes eloquio vobis taliter respondendum duximus, quod si a divitibus pro nutrimento hospitalitas postulatur, in his non est examinatio facienda. Nam si Abraham circa secum hospitium petentes fuisset sollicitus indigator non utique angelos hospicio suscepisset, sed forsan ipsos inter caeteros repulisset [...] hujus igitur exempli consideratione inducti dicimus, quod omnibus tam divitibus quam pauperibus hospitalitatis et charitatis opera impendatis. Non enim ex persona corum quos accipitis mercedem vobis retributurus est Dominus, sed in sincera intentione in misericordiae operibus et actibus retributio praeparatur': Gerald of Wales, 'De Invectionibus', *Opera*, ed. J.S.Brewer (RS:1; London, 1861), 6.xxvi, pp.188-9; *Autobiography*, ed. Warner, pp.201-2.

'that which he spent on the rich, like that which he spent upon the poor, might be accounted a merit and accrue to the attainment of a heavenly crown'. So we can see that justifications of aristocratic hospitality follow a real debate about its validity.

This concern is also reflected in the satire on Cistercian monks. Monastic institutions also promoted an ideal of hospitality for all; the only qualification apparently being that St Benedict suggested that the poor needed more attention, as the 'fear that the rich inspire is enough of itself to secure them honour' (nam divitum teror ipse sibi exigit honorem).[146] In social terms, Benedict's last comment may, however, be read as something of an understatement, as it could be argued that relations with the rich were of such political and economic importance that they were enough in themselves to secure to the rich special attention by monastic institutions.

In fact, just such an argument is provided by Walter Map, in his complaint about the preferment of rich guests over men such as himself, in *De Nugis Curialium*. As part of his lengthy exposé of the Cistercians, Walter accuses them of giving little to the poor, while going out of their way to serve the rich.[147] His phraseology is interesting, for he employs the same image of left-handed giving that we encountered in Chrétien de Troyes's discussion of the *largesse* of Alexander and Count Philip of Flanders, based on the biblical saying 'let not the left hand know what the right hand is giving'. Walter states

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[146] McCann, *Rule*, c.53, p.58.
[147] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.25, pp.98-9.

'since they give neither in proportion to their own abundance nor to the need of the poor, it would seem that they give with their left hand, not their right', thus invoking again the image of bad *largesse.* Walter's description of the hospitality of the Cistercians runs as follows:

> His quos timore potestatis uel emungendos suscipiunt, toto splendore popine propiciantur, tota uultus et uerborum adest leticia; ipsis eorum tam benigne, tam misericorditer apertus est sinus, tam simpliciter, tam ydiotice cuncta profusa, credas angelos esse non homines, et in abcessu tuo miraberis laudes eorum.
>
> Those whom they receive from fear of their power or with intent to fleece them they propitiate with all the brilliancy of the restaurant. There is no end to the gaiety of face and speech: their purse is opened with such kindness and sympathy, their stores are poured forth with such freedom and simplicity that you would think them angels, not men, and when you leave them you will be lost in wonder and praise.

The noblemen receive joyful and generous hospitality similar to that described in the account of Count Baldwin, and in the chivalric romances. Yet the humble 'Egyptians' do not receive such treatment, says Walter, for after the hymns 'none of us is invited, or dragged in, no, nor allowed to enter the hostelry, though after a long stage that is just the time when rest and refreshment are most needed and a repulse is most keenly felt'.[148] However true or biased the complaints of Walter may have been,[149] it is clear that pressures were placed on monasteries, in the double expectation that they supplied to the poor, but that they also recognised noble guests 'fittingly'. Wealth and class encouraged

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[148] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, i.25, pp.98-101.
[149] Walter Map's portrayal of the Cistercians, whilst not balanced, represented nevertheless elements of common complaints: *De Nugis Curialium*, pp.xliii-iv.

preferential treatment that conflicted with and compromised monastic ideals of hospitality.

We might also compare Benedict's rule that fasting may be suspended on account of a guest with the following tale of Jacques de Vitry: 'Another man vowed that he would eat meat only when he had guests, and then invited some on all the days when he was wont to eat meat ... So certain monks who were forbidden to eat meat unless it were game, hunted their hogs with dogs after the fashion of a chase'.[150] Jacques de Vitry also tells the story of a minstrel who is rudely received by a porter at a rich monastery, which was ruled by a mean abbot. He is given bad food and a hard and dirty bed, and gets his revenge for his discomfort by telling the abbot he had enjoyed a great banquet, a large fire, and gifts. The abbot is very angry at this idea, and the porter is turned out.[151] Such works must be appreciated in their context as satire, but perhaps again they recognise a distinction of types of guests which was indeed made by monks; a distinction made necessary by political and economic factors.

Once again, then, issues of public display and nobility are seen to influence acts of hospitality. Some of these accounts attest to the need to recognise noble status, and an expectation of a level of service and provision which Count Baldwin clearly felt aware of. There was a pressure on monasteries to recognise the nobility of its guests, and to distinguish between rich and poor for political as well as religious reasons. The Cistercians' 'fear' of

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[150] *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. T.F.Crane (London, 1890), cclxxviii.
[151] Jacques de Vitry, *Exempla*, ed. Crane, lxvii.

noblemen, and their desire to please them, reflect their political and economic position, and it was not simple cupidity which influenced the contrasting grandeur with which they received those of a higher status and authority.

The charges of providing for the poor and maintaining a quality of accommodation suitable for nobles could become a burden to monasteries, and the role of money and the reality of the expense involved in noble acts of hospitality[152] are important considerations. As we have seen, monasteries felt themselves to be susceptible to the dangers of the outside world, both moral and physical, and financial strain was placed on them by the obligation to supply vast quantities of food to both the poor and nobles.[153] There was clearly a different level of service for rich and poor, which was not dictated solely within the monastery, and social status did affect the nature of the service provided.

This section has demonstrated the influence of political and economic factors. However, an important distinction which must be made is that hospitality between secular nobles does not revolve around money, but around relationships of honour and obligations. Unable to understand this noble code is a man, in another exemplum by Jacques de Vitry,[154] who came to Chartres nearly naked and was unable to find anybody to house him for the night. Refused hospitality by a leader of the city, the would-be guest punched the

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[152] The German kings' retinue stretched into the hundreds, sometimes thousands: Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, p.58; the burden on monasteries was also great: Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller*, pp.82-4.

[153] Sometimes the monks themselves complained about the food they were left with, having entertained important guests: Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller*, p.135.

[154] Frenken (ed.), *Die Exempla des Jacob von Vitry*, no.23, p.110.

nobleman hard in the face: 'elevato pugno fortiter in facie percussit prepositum'. We are left in no doubt as to the moral of the story, for we are told that 'that foolish one preferred violence to lying under the open sky for one night'. The host is perfectly within his rights to refuse hospitality to a non-noble, while according to the code of hospitality it might be wrong for the same man to refuse hospitality to another knight. Hospitality requires the ability of host and guest to understand and perform a series of ritual behaviour; hospitality becomes an *art* of welcoming, providing for, and entertaining strangers as though they are friends. By these rules, the stranger becomes the guest.

Conclusions

The study of lay and secular attitudes to hospitality reveals that it was a significant social value in the twelfth century. While at times elements of the different ideologies of hospitality that we have explored can be seen to have overlapped, they are also seen to have come into conflict and were driven by different agendas. According to the religious view of hospitality, the stranger represented a higher power, and deserved the protection of the host in this light; lay texts took on board ideas about the sacredness of hospitality, but the honour involved in the reception and protection of guests took on a more secular nature, and bore relation to predominantly social rather than solely religious obligations. Hospitality increasingly becomes described as an ideology of the noble classes.

The transition caused some concern, and was accompanied by a number of discussions about the nature of hospitality, regarding issues of money and status. While the Benedictine Rule, chivalric romances, and the accounts of commentators such as Walter Map and Gerald of Wales, all promote an ideal of free hospitality, they also all demonstrate concern about the pressures caused by the obligation of hospitality. Acts of hospitality were frequently influenced by politics and social status, and while hospitality was a matter of moral duty, as this chapter has also shown, it could provide a way of asserting status and power.

Moreover, hospitality was important in a social and symbolic capacity. It emerges as a highly ritualised practice, one indeed which sometimes overrides normal relationships. A reputation for hospitality was clearly relevant, and nobles such as the generous Count Baldwin took secular values of hospitality seriously. As with *largesse*, in chivalric romances the political aspect of hospitality can be played down, with hospitality seeming on the surface to be a matter of joyous display; but these texts also deal with many difficulties arising from the integration of strangers, as well as economic pressures. The code of hospitality may serve to protect a guest, but it may also make him vulnerable and subordinate, as William of Rheims ultimately accepted in his pretence of drunkenness at the table of Count Baldwin.

Practical considerations can be seen to have limited the provision of hospitality, even on the part of monastic institutions. That the importance of

wealth and social status were often debated is shown in all of the text types studied. In romances, payment for hospitality is quite frequently mentioned, and the romances reflected aspects of real life in their descriptions of the dangers to which knights are exposed, and the motivations which lay behind apparently generous acts of hospitality, influences to which all of the different social groups were subject.

It cannot be disputed that the romances promoted a standard of behaviour in their portrayals of hospitality. The etiquette of courtly conduct can be seen to work as a controlling factor, by which acts of hospitality worked to modify behaviour. One common motif in chivalric romances is the acceptance of enemies into the court, and their assimilation into that society, during which the relationship changes and they become treated as equals. This is an example of the culture of integration characteristic of some of the episodes of hospitality in romances.

The ideal code of chivalric hospitality presented in romances works to help knights, and acts as a positive, protective force, allowing them a degree of protection. Moreover, it makes a definite distinction between knights and certain merchants, whose primary concerns often centre on money. The romances consolidate the sense of the exclusivity of knights by promoting a noble form of hospitality which is applicable to them.

Hospitality is thus strongly connected in romances and courtesy books with the idea of nobility. We see in romances an attempt to avoid an association with commerce, just as we witnessed in relation to the chivalric system of

largesse. Noble hospitality is expressed rather in terms of a symbolic currency. The romances and courtesy books were themselves aimed at knights and clerics, and these chivalric writings make hospitality primarily a noble virtue of knights. Hospitality emerges as another chivalric value charged with both ideological and political significance, and one which informed the acts of real nobles. This lends support to the growing sense of knightly identity in the twelfth century.

Chapter Five: Villainy

'The bloody-minded side of the code ... was the essence of chivalry.'[1]

The detailed study of key chivalric institutions and virtues in the preceding chapters has revealed the value of each as chivalric forms which were recognised and which had social and political significance in the twelfth century. In this chapter I want to consider chivalric ideals further by examining their opposite: *villainy.* If chivalric behaviour had clearly identifiable archetypes, were chivalric ideals also defined or bolstered by representations of the unchivalrous? By exploring attitudes to villainy, we may further our understanding of the importance of chivalric ideals in twelfth-century northern France.

We have already encountered various types of unchivalrous behaviour in relation to the chivalric ideals and institutions studied in the previous chapters. Cowardice, idleness, a lack of the virtues of *largesse*,[2] hospitality and courtesy, and violence toward a disadvantaged opponent, whether a maiden[3] or a vanquished enemy, were all considered to be unchivalrous characteristics. Attitudes to chivalric virtues have been seen to be complex or even conflicting at times: was there room for a conflict of ideals in definitions of villainy, or were certain acts universally considered to be unchivalrous and punished accordingly?

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[1] R.W.Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1999), p.8.

[2] In Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du Graal*, Philip of Flanders and Alexander the Great are used as representatives of the contrasting virtue and vice of *largesse* and vainglory; the merchants in *Guillaume d'Angleterre* also embody the attitudes of the bourgeoisie which directly oppose the ideology of *largesse*: see Chapter Three.

[3] In the *First Continuation* the rejected Aalardin wounds Cador, the brother of his would-be lover, and then 'cruelly' threatens to hand her over to his companions. The maiden calls the knight a 'devil' and a 'monster' ('ce deable, ce maufé', l.7731), and states that 'a knight who takes a virgin in force commits an act of pure wickedness' ('Certes il n'est pas chevaliers/ Qui par force fame covoite,/ Ainz fait felonie revoite'): *Caradoc*, ll.7712-4.

This chapter explores those misdeeds which are described in texts using the terms 'vilenie' or 'traïson'. It begins with a consideration of the general meanings of 'vilenie', and then moves on to its more serious forms. Treason was one of the *causae majores*, a term which denoted the serious crimes liable to capital punishment, and which was translated as 'vilenie' in legal sources.[4] In such situations the conflicting pressures of intention, honour, mercy, and justice produce an interesting balance of chivalrous restraint, trickery, and violence.

It is necessary to exercise a degree of caution in examining the villainy of knights, particularly in relation to acts of physical violence. Knights present a formidable image in many accounts in chronicles and chivalric romances, sometimes even appearing as demons,[5] and concern about knightly violence was voiced by many contemporaries, as has been examined above.[6] However, as the opening quotation of this chapter reiterates, the chivalrous behaviour of knights was not defined by questions of etiquette or mercy alone. Knights were fighting men whose honour was closely linked with military prowess, and activity in combat was a source of knightly pride and identity. If we are truly to understand chivalric ideals, then we must move away from the scholarly opposition of 'war' and 'chivalry',[7] which reduces chivalry to an unfulfilled ideal in the face of evident violence, and we must explore more fully the nature and the

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[4] Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, pp.29-31.

[5] In the *Conte du Graal*, the appearance of a band of armed knights initially inspires fear in Perceval, who mistakes them for 'devils'; this reaction is then echoed by his mother, who fears that he has seen knights, 'who kill whatever they come upon' (l.398).

[6] See Chapter Two.

[7] 'The middle ages were, throughout, violent and warlike times, and that is why chivalry flourished': M.Keen, *Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London, 1996), p.19.

circumstances of the act. Was violence justified in some cases and vilified in others? Were certain forms of planned violence, such as acts of treason against a lord, worse than others? By looking at representations of villainy in chivalric romances, chronicles, and legal documents, this chapter seeks to establish how coherent and how socially relevant were the sets of ideals which are commonly brought together today under the collective title of 'chivalry'.

The renaissance of the twelfth century witnessed a revived interest in the study of law, and in northern France as older Germanic and Roman laws met new innovations, legal practices moved away from the system of private vengeance and reconciliation and became an increasingly public matter, subjected to the more centralised control of the counts and the king.[8] The inter-relation of customs as expressed in law and literature of the twelfth-century have been demonstrated by Bloch.[9] This chapter conducts a collaborative analysis of chivalric romances, chronicles, and twelfth-century legal principles, in order to establish the impact of chivalric ideals.

The first questions which need to be asked are: what constituted villainy, and who were its perpetrators? The first section (5.i) explores the different

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[8] R.C.Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis van het strafrecht in Vlaanderen van de XI^e tot de XIV^e eeuw* (Brussels, 1954); Van Caenegem, 'Law and Power in Twelfth-Century Flanders', in Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power*, pp.149-71.

[9] Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*. The reading of romance literature and the learning of customary law are directly linked by Philippe de Navarre (b.c.1195) in his *Assises de Jerusalem*; and in *Les Quatre Ages de l'homme* he refers to the educational function of stories: Kennedy, 'The Knight as Reader', pp.71-4. See also: Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, pp.119-22; F.C.Riedel, *Crime and Punishment in the Old French Romances* (New York, 1938).

ramifications of the term 'vilenie',[10] in chivalric romances, chronicles, and legal documents. The 'vilains cas' had a legal sense, relating to the breaking of terms or deeds committed with stealth. The section begins by considering the various meanings of 'vilenie', and then moves toward the serious forms of villainy which were recognised in legal documents, establishing how far there is a correlation between these text types in their attitudes to villainy.

In the second section (5.ii), discussion of the complexities of chivalrous and villainous behaviour deepens in an extended consideration of treason, which was a serious transgression of knightly codes of loyalty and which had a basis in twelfth-century law. Acts of treason enable us to observe the simultaneous play of knightly prowess and chivalric restraint, and the pressure of conflicting loyalties, within a situation of military conflict. Accounts of treason in chronicles and chivalric romances will be related to contemporary legal attitudes.

In order to assess the impact of attitudes to villainy on the lives of knights, and by extension their relationship with chivalric ideals, it is also helpful to examine how such misdeeds were dealt with. The final section (5.iii) thus considers the public punishment of villainy. Were assessments of culpability consistent in the different text types? How much latitude was allowed for circumstance, and how much did punishments vary? The questions about

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[10] Note that because this chapter seeks to test the implications of the term 'vilenie' and its derivatives, I have refrained from adopting Kibler's translations of Chrétien de Troyes's romances, which interprets the terms variously as 'unchivalrous' or 'unknightly'. To avoid prejudging the term, I translate each occurrence simply as 'villain', 'villainous', or 'villainy'.

villainy outlined in this introduction will pave the way for a deeper understanding of the expression and interpretation of chivalric ideals in twelfth-century northern France.

5.i Villainy: Anti-Chivalry?

Vilain; *vilainer*; *vilenie*: the frequency with which these and related words appear in chivalric romances suggests that villainy is an important topos.[11] Contemporary legal texts also reflect a growing interest in the nature of villainous acts, and their codification became increasingly formalised in the twelfth century. This section investigates the different meanings of villainy, by considering instances of the use of the term 'vilenie' in chivalric romances, beginning with its more neutral applications, and moving on to instances of serious acts of evil committed by knights. Finally it seeks to establish whether romance accounts of villainy had a historical grounding by exploring some of these episodes in the light of contemporary legal principles.

'Vilains' is the second word of Chrétien de Troyes's first romance, *Erec et Enide*:

> Li vilains dit an son respit
> que tel chose a l'an an despit
> qui molt valt mialz que l'an ne cuide;
> por ce fet bien qui son estuide
> atorne a bien quel que il l'ait. (ll.1-3)
>
> The *villain* in his proverb says that one might find oneself holding in contempt something that is worth much more than one

[11] For a catalogue of the occurrence of such words in the chivalric romances of Chrétien de Troyes, see M-L Ollier, *Lexique et Concordance de Chrétien de Troyes* (Montréal, 1986), s.v. *vilainie*.

believes; therefore a man does well to make good use of his learning according to whatever understanding he has.[12]

Deriving from the Latin 'villanum', meaning 'farm-dweller', the Old French 'vilains' had as its primary meaning 'peasant'. This passage illustrates the neutral meaning of 'vilains': here there are no specifically pejorative connotations, and the term refers to the lower classes. But the neutral sense of peasant gave rise to a number of pejorative senses. In the adjectival form 'vilains' denoted boorishness,[13] and the term 'vilenie' appealed further to the sense of social or moral baseness, denoting shame, slander, and uncourtly behaviour.[14] Low birth and low-down behaviour are linked at their linguistic root.

Did class status therefore have implications for the way in which villainous behaviour was perceived? Characters who are lower down in the social scale, who are not knights and who customarily have villainous characteristics in chivalric romances, include churls, dwarfs, and giants. Generally churls are base, dwarfs untrustworthy and cruel, and giants are cruel and violent, as we will see. Their physical appearance often corresponds with their inner villainy; these creatures are singularly unattractive. We have already met the forest-dwelling churl in *Le Chevalier au Lion*, whose ill-favoured aspect is noted by Calogrenant thus:

Uns vileins, qui resanbloit Mor,
Leiz et hideus a desmesure,
einsi tres leide criature

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[12] Kibler, p.37.
[13] See also *Lexicon des Mittelalters,* 9 vols. (München, 1980-98), 8, 1671-2.
[14] F.Godefroy, *Lexique de l'ancien français* (Paris, 1901), p.535.

qu'an porroit dire de boche,
assis s'estoit sor une çoche,
une grant maçue en sa main.
Je m'aprochai vers le vilain,
si vi qu'il ot grosse la teste
plus que roncins ne autre beste,
chevox mechiez et front pelé,
s'ot pres de deus espanz de lé,
oroilles mossues et granz
autiex com a uns olifanz,
les sorcix granz et le vis plat,
ialz de çuete, et nes de chat,
boche fandue come lous,
danz de sengler aguz et rous,
barbe rosse, grenons tortiz,
et le manton aers au piz,
longue eschine torte et boçue. (ll.286-305)

A *villain* who resembled a Moor, ugly and hideous in the extreme - such an ugly creature that he cannot be described in words - was seated on a stump, with a great club in his hand. I approached the *villain* and saw that his head was larger than a nag's or other beast's. His hair was unkempt and his bare forehead was more than two spans wide; his ears were as hairy and as huge as an elephant's; his eyebrows heavy and his face flat. He had the eyes of an owl and the nose of a cat, jowls split like a wolf's, with the sharp reddish teeth of a boar; he had a russet beard, tangled moustache, a chin down to his breast and a long, twisted spine with a hump.[15]

The contrasting physical descriptions of the typically attractive knight-hero and his ugly and uncourtly counterparts serve to emphasise their behavioural dissimilitude. The peasant embodies everything that is alien to knightly culture and aesthetically undesirable: he even resembles the religious other, the Moor.

The unflattering and animalistic impression of this particular churl is recalled soon afterwards by the account of Yvain's reaction to him:

plus de cent foiz se seingna
de la mervoille que il ot,

[15] Kibler, p.298.

comant Nature feire sot
oevre si leide et si vilainne. (ll.796-9)

He crossed himself more than a hundred times in wonder at how Nature could have created a work of such ugliness and *villainy*.[16]

Here 'vilainne' denotes commonness and uncourtliness. Wielding a club, which can only be seen as inferior to a knight's weaponry; living in the wild forest, as opposed to the civilised court, and being an expert not in knightly adventure but in herding techniques, the churl has those characteristics which Calogrenant evidently expects in a low-born figure. In this particular case, the churl is surprisingly civil, if not as civilised as Calogrenant may wish. Nevertheless as Calogrenant's suspicious attitude toward the churl and the descriptions above reveal, churls in romances are envisaged as animals and are expected to be base: 'a courteous man, though dead, is more worthy than a living knave', as we are reminded at the beginning of *Le Chevalier au Lion* (l.31). In this sense low birth equates with base behaviour in practice as well as in terminology.

The villainousness of the churl appears to be more a matter of low birth and correspondingly ungracious behaviour than of any truly grievous transgressions of chivalric codes. Yet while it might be expected that codes of chivalry would not apply to those of low status, nevertheless evil acts committed by dwarfs and giants which involve immoral violence are in fact judged according to the chivalric standards followed by knights. Dwarfs are typically evil characters in chivalric romances, known for their cruelty as well as for their trickery and deception, and I want to consider two examples in the romances of

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[16] Kibler, p.304.

Chrétien de Troyes.[17] In *Erec et Enide*, as we have seen, first Guinevere's maiden and then Erec suffer at the hands of a dwarf when they come across an armed knight riding in the company of a maiden and a dwarf who is carrying a whip, which can only symbolise violence, rather than the sword of knighthood which also signifies protection. When the queen orders her maiden to find out who the travellers are, the dwarf, who is described as 'full of evil' ('de felenie fu plains', l.164), and 'baseborn'('molt fu fel et de pute ere', l.171), strikes the approaching maiden with his whip. The queen is distressed by this action:

> 'Hé! Erec, biax amis,' fet ele,
> 'molt me poise de ma pucele
> que si a bleciee cil nains;
> molt est li chevaliers vilains,
> quant il sofri que tex fauture
> feri si bele criature.' (ll.195-200)
>
> 'Oh! Erec, good friend,' said she, 'I am very upset about my maiden, whom this dwarf has wounded in such a way. That knight is most *villainous* to have allowed such a freak to strike so beautiful a creature.'[18]

The baseness of the dwarf is highlighted once again when he strikes the unarmed Erec on the neck, forming stripes on his face (ll.219-24). Such 'freaks' are presented as the natural enemies of attractive and moral nobles.[19] The lack of respect appears to be mutual: we are told that on originally approaching the

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[17] See also F.D.Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure in the Chevalier de la Charrette* (The Hague, 1966), pp.110-111, n.15.
[18] Kibler, p.39.
[19] Thomas of Britain's romance of Tristan describes evil as an opposition to nobility: *Le Roman de Tristan*, ed. F.Lecoy, CFMA (Paris, 1991), ll.285ff.

dwarf, the maiden felt contempt for him due to his size: 'lo nain ot an grant despit/ por ce qu'ele le vit petit' (ll.177-8).[20]

The second episode, in *Le Chevalier au Lion*, features a dwarf who accompanies the evil giant Harpin of the Mountain. The pair are leading the starving and bedraggled sons of Yvain's host, on emaciated horses:

> uns nains, fel come boz anflez,
> les ot coe a coe noez,
> ses aloit costoiant toz quatre,
> onques ne les fina de batre
> d'unes corgiees a sis neuz
> don molt cuidoit feire que preuz. (ll.4097-102)
>
> A dwarf, ugly as a puffed-up toad, had tied the horses' tails together and was walking beside the four of them; he was beating them constantly with a six-knotted whip to show how brave he was.[21]

Not for these criminals is the concern for horses exhibited by Yvain and Esclados during their combat.[22] The dwarf and giant lead the sons of Yvain's host onwards in this villainous manner: 'vilmant les amenoient', l.4104). Villainy is here related to cruelty, violence, and degradation.

The acts of atrocity committed by these characters stand in contrast to the heroic and worthy acts of chivalrous knights. They go against fundamental functions and codes of knighthood, including the protection and honouring of

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[20] Kibler, p.39.
[21] Kibler, p.346.
[22] *Chevalier au Lion*, ll.855-8; Kibler, p.305. In his account of the war between Henry II and William the Lion, king of Scotland, Jordan Fantosme dwells on the misfortune dealt to a knight after the loss of a splendid horse in battle: 'il pert l'auferant, dunt il est mult dolent:/ Il est feru par mi si chiét hastivement;/ Ço est grant damagë, kar mult en iert dolent' (he loses his horse when it is transfixed [by a spear] and falls immediately, whereat Richard is very grieved, for it is a great loss': *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R.C.Johnston (Oxford, 1981), ll.1879-81.

women, and mercy toward a disadvantaged enemy. These non-noble villains serve to emphasise the chivalry of noble knights by representing a negation of their ideals in such confrontations. They represent the assertion by its anti-type of chivalric identity and values, in terms of a scale of values which are clearly intended to be appreciated by the audience.[23]

Yet the base acts by non-nobles examined here, while not excusable, are perhaps to be expected of these creatures, who are portrayed as having been born into such a mentality. Noble combatants do not have a similar excuse. Is there any sense of their behaviour being either more or less excusable than their less-than-human opponents? It is interesting that in the passage from *Erec et Enide* cited above, the knight accompanying the dwarf when Erec is attacked is accused of villainy. First Guinevere states that he is 'villainous' ('molt est li chevaliers vilains', l.198) for letting a 'freak' ('fauture') hit the beautiful maiden. The arrogant stranger who allows such an act of violence to occur against a maiden and then an unarmed knight is then described as 'vilains et outrageus' by Erec (l.241). Erec is forced to delay his vengeance because the knight would surely kill him if he were to strike the dwarf. So a knight is culpable for allowing acts of violence to occur when it is within his power to stop them; indeed, he is neglecting his knightly duties as a protector of the vulnerable and an upholder of justice. Only a villainous knight can be associated with such a foul and unchivalrous counterpart as the dwarf.

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[23] See also J.J.Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages*, Medieval Cultures 17 (Minneapolis, 1999), pp.29-37; Carasso-Bulow, *The Merveilleux*, pp.23-8, 103-36.

However, despite the villainy of the knight, in his failure to protect maidens and unarmed knights, the knightly duty of protection still requires that when Erec finally confronts the knight and defeats him, he must extend mercy toward his vanquished opponent.[24] In fact, a failure to grant mercy will actually mean that Erec himself is liable to a charge of villainy. The defeated knight reasons thus:

> 'Des que tu m'as oltré et pris,
> ja n'an avroies los ne pris,
> se tu des or mes m'ocioies;
> trop grant vilenie feroies' (ll.991-4)
>
> 'Since you have defeated me and taken me prisoner, you would gain no glory or esteem if you went on to kill me; you would commit a very great *villainy*.'[25]

In such cases of vanquished wrongdoers, then, villainy does not warrant reciprocal violence. The villainous knight in *Erec et Enide* is ultimately redeemed: having been defeated by Erec, he takes himself to Arthur's court as a prisoner, and is then made a member of the court. The knight is aware of chivalrous codes of behaviour, as opposed to the creatures discussed above, who were villainous by nature. He chose to act villainously, and has now repented.

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[24] Whether or not to spare vanquished enemies is a question explored by Gerald of Wales. In his tale of the defeat of Waterford, he describes the two very different approaches of Raymond and Hervey of Montmorency. According to Raymond, the prisoners were 'non hostes iam, sed homines; non rebelles, sed debellati, sed victi' ('not enemies, but fellow human beings; they are not rebels, but beaten and vanquished opponents'). This opportunity to show mercy was not recognised by Hervey, who argued that the victory would only be complete with the destruction of these men. Gerald of Wales clearly disapproves of the killing of these men, arguing that the victors 'misused their good fortune by displaying deplorable and inhuman brutality': *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. and trans. A.B.Scott and F.X.Martin (Dublin, 1978), pp.58-65.
[25] Kibler, p.49.

Do villainous knights therefore make an active decision to act against chivalric codes of behaviour? In *Le Chevalier de la Charrete* Meleagant is the arch-villain. He has imprisoned many nobles and has taken the queen captive. It is not just his actions which are deplorable, for he is also arrogant in his waywardness. In fact his character is placed in direct moral contrast to that of his father, King Bademagu:

Apoiez a une fenestre
s'estoit li rois Bademaguz,
qui molt ert soutix et aguz
a tote enor et a tot bien,
et lëauté sor tote rien
voloit par tot garder et faire;
et ses filz, qui tot le contraire
a son pooir toz jorz feisoit,
car deslëautez li pleisoit,
n'onques de feire vilenie
et traïson et felenie
ne fu lassez ne enuiez,
s'estoit delez lui apoiez. (ll.3142-54)

> Leaning on a window ledge was king Bademagu, who was most scrupulous and keen in every matter of honour and right and who esteemed and practised loyalty above all other virtues. And resting there beside him was his son, who strove constantly to do the opposite, since disloyalty pleased him, and he never tired of *villainy*, treason, and felony.[26]

Just as dwarf villains contrast with noble knights in their appearance and their failure to behave in a chivalrous manner, so Meleagant's qualities and his reactions to events exactly oppose those of his noble father; so much so that because of his unchivalrousness Bademagu supports Lancelot's cause over that of his son, and refuses to take part in the treason Meleagant is pursuing:

De toz mes homes et de moi

[26] Kibler, p.246.

li doing trives et seürté;
onques ne fis deslëauté,
ne traïson, ne felenie,
ne je nel comancerai mie
por toi ne que por un estrange. (ll.3254-59)

I offer him peace and protection on behalf of myself and all my men. I have never acted disloyally or practised treason or felony, and I will no more do so for your sake than for that of a total stranger.[27]

Here the recognition of villainy overrides familial bonds. Yet to his father's honourable words, Meleagant replies that he is no do-gooder: 'Tant con vos plest, soiez prodon, et moi lessiez estre cruel' ('Be a gentleman as long as you please, but let me be cruel!').[28] Meleagant confirms himself as a villain, rejecting the codes of knightly honour in order to achieve his own covetous ends, and his father conversely rejects his own blood relative in favour of chivalric behaviour and the right cause. In wilfully continuing to behave in this way, Meleagant effectively condemns himself to punishment.

The noble status of knights does not guarantee their virtue, or safeguard them from moral and physical retribution. By their anti-chivalry knights can enhance the chivalry of knight heroes, and through their villainy they serve to enforce the definition and the appreciation of chivalrous behaviour. Chivalric ideals triumph over villainous acts when the heroic knights defeat the villains. I want now to explore the legal ramifications of attitudes to villainy by comparing

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[27] Kibler, p.247. In Galbert of Bruges's account, blood kinship was posited as a reason for clemency by Bertulf's kin. When besieged in the tower, they tried (and failed) to negotiate a soft deal by means of an appeal to the obligations arising from their kinship ties: *De multro*, c.38.
[28] *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, ll.3294-5; Kibler, p.248. Meleagant's treason will be examined further in the next section.

a passage from *Erec et Enide* with contemporary legal sources. After the encounter with the dwarf in *Erec et Enide*, Erec is pursued by several bands of knights while he is out seeking adventure in an effort to rebuild his knightly reputation. First to be met is a band of robber-knights. Having spotted Enide but not Erec, the leader of the group announces to his companions that he wishes to have Enide's horse, and proclaims to his companions that if they fail to procure booty from this situation, they are 'recreant' and deserve no honour:

> Se nos ici ne gaaignons,
> honi somes et recreant
> et a mervoilles mescheant. (ll.2800-02)
>
> If you don't make a killing here, we are shameful and dishonourable and incredibly unlucky.[29]

It is in fact recreance with which Erec has been charged, and which he is seeking to refute by performing deeds of chivalry; yet to the villainous knights, recreance means the failure to perform deeds of villainy. They define their own honour and shame in the reverse image of that of Erec, and judge each other according to a counter-code of villainy.

The historical seriousness of the charge of recreance is made clear in the legal treatise 'Glanville', which was written c.1187-1190, possibly by the justiciar Ranulf de Glanville.[30] This work sets out the practices of litigation and trial in civil and criminal law at the royal and shire courts, during the reign of

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[29] Kibler, p.71.

[30] G.D.G.Hall (ed.), *Tractatus de legibus et consuetidinibus regni anglie qui glanvilla vocatur* (London, 1965), pp.27-8; 'The legal treatise known as 'Glanville'', *English Historical Documents*, II: 1042-1189, trans. D.C.Douglas and G.Greenaway (London, 1953), pp.462-79. Ranulf de Glanville was an associate of Gerald of Wales: see Chapter One.

Henry II. It details how the Grand Assize, the royal privilege which allowed exclusion from trial by battle, could prevent a knight from enduring the extreme shame which would come from having to confess himself 'recreant'. Thus he avoided

> saltem perhempnis infamie obprobium illius infesti et uerecundi uerbi quod in ore uicti turpiter sonat consecutinum. (II.7)
>
> the opprobrium and lasting infamy of that dreadful and ignominious word that so disgracefully sounds from the mouth of the vanquished champion.[31]

So the bands of robber-knights eager for booty in *Erec et Enide* represent an anti-type of values which were upheld by law in the twelfth century, and this is why Erec is so intent upon refuting the charge of recreance.

So far the chivalric romances have suggested that villainy was not linked to status alone, but was also a question of attitude. This appears to reflect contemporary legal trends, which were placing increasing emphasis on motivation in a categorisation of crimes, and which involved ideas about the ethic of intention.[32] For example, one of the key factors which determined the definition of offences in the twelfth century was whether they were committed with stealth.[33] The element of secrecy and premeditation meant that theft was considered worse than robbery. Thieves could expect the death sentence by hanging, which was the most shameful way to die.

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[31] 'Glanville', trans. Douglas and Greenaway, p.467. Knights defeated in judicial combat are among those figures who travel in the shameful cart featured in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*: see below.

[32] Bloch, *Medieval French Literature*, p.39; Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, p.33.

[33] Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis,* pp.64, 70-1. Accordingly, crimes committed at night were considered to be particularly serious.

It is therefore important to consider some of the less than virtuous acts of the good knights of Arthur's entourage, in order to understand more about constructions of villainy. For it is not only ugly creatures and stranger knights who perform villainous acts, including theft and deception. I want to explore the actions of Yvain in *Le Chevalier au Lion* in this light. Yvain obtains his wife Laudine after killing her husband in combat, and he then travels away on knightly escapades. Before he leaves, he promises Laudine that he will return within one year, and after this agreement she lends him a ring. When Yvain fails to maintain his oath to return, he is visited by a damsel who accuses him of theft, and calls him a cheat: 'le mançongier, le guileor, le desleal, le tricheor'.[34] The damsel demands that Yvain returns the ring. It seems that even knights with chivalrous reputations are capable of acts of villainy.

How are we to reconcile the heroism of this knight with his apparent villainy? The answer lies in the portrayal of this act, for we are not allowed to judge Yvain without being aware that his actions are part of a more complex situation, or a competing set of demands. For example, Yvain pursues Laudine's dying husband Esclados because of the pressure put on him by the spiteful Kay, a figure of anti-chivalry who is present to take the blame away from the central character. Kay has often been seen by critics as a foil to good knights such as Gawain:[35] he always suffers in contrast to them as a consequence of his

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[34] *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ll.2721-2; Kibler, p.329. The breaking of the bond of loyalty by Yvain is discussed in more detail in section 5.ii, below.

[35] 'He is neither clown, coward, nor traitor, but a scoffer, scapegoat, trouble-maker, and foil': N.J.Lacy, *The Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1986), pp.313-4 (313).

unchivalrous actions, and thus allows their own heroic acts to appear all the more worthy. In this romance, Kay's sarcastic comments at Arthur's court which heap scorn upon Arthur's knights serve to make Kay himself look less courtly. Moreover it is, we recall, because of Kay that Yvain sets out alone on the adventure in the first place. Yvain marries Laudine because although he has killed her husband, he is by this very fact proved to be the best knight and therefore the worthiest knight she could marry. He is indeed far worthier than the cowardly knights who fail to defend the castle for Laudine: they again serve to emphasise the bravery of Yvain.[36] Although his failure to keep his word is without doubt considered to be a great crime, he spends the rest of the romance making up for this error by performing chivalrous deeds on the part of other maidens who are in need, in the same way that Erec rebuilt his chivalric reputation after having neglected deeds of chivalry. The good knights of chivalric romances are thus apparently capable of acts of villainy; but these deeds are either recognised and amended, or deflected by means of the worse villainy of more eminently blameable characters.

This has interesting implications for our understanding of attitudes to villainy in the twelfth century. Overall there appears to be a distinction between the character and conduct of outright villains, who can be either dwarfs, giants, demons, or unrepentant knights, and those good knights who are never allowed to become villains proper, and with whom identification is always intended. Villainy in the examples refers variously to vulgarity, recreance, violence, and

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[36] Kibler, pp.318, 377.

theft. These definitions in chivalric romances, which suggest that intentions do count in the assessment of villainy, reflect the growing perception in twelfth-century law that villainy was a matter of morality.

5.ii Treason

This section investigates accounts of treason in chivalric romances and chronicles, and explores the wider contexts and the legal implications of the events described, to see what they can reveal about attitudes to villainy and the penetration of chivalric values. The analysis of villains in chivalric romances has suggested that hardened villains who showed no remorse could expect no mercy. Treason was regarded as an extremely serious crime in the twelfth century, and it provides a useful way of testing how attitudes to villainy were played out. Was treason easy to define, and were traitors unquestionably beyond forgiveness?

I want to begin by considering the account of the murder of Count Charles 'the Good' of Flanders written by Galbert, a notary of Bruges. This provides an exceptional case study of treason and its ramifications in twelfth-century Flanders, in what is essentially an eye-witness account, and it allows us to see how far attitudes to villainy were endorsed in a period of intense political turmoil. The section then turns to different examples of treason in chivalric romances, in order to ascertain whether their portrayal of treason reflected contemporary values.

It is helpful to establish first what was meant by 'treason' in the twelfth century. In general terms, treason was a deed of disloyalty performed against a

figure to whom fealty was owed, and it was a recognised crime in the twelfth century. Treason included plotting to kill a lord, and sleeping with a lord's wife. It was a legal concept, and it was punishable by law. In fact punishment for treason extended to anybody who was associated with the crime, as we will see. With the revival of interest in Roman Law in the twelfth century came the concept of *laesa maiestatis*, which referred to acts against the state or its representatives. In *Glanville*, 'lese-majesty' includes anything 'tending to the death of the king, or the moving of a sedition against his person or his realm or his army'.[37] The phrase 'seditio' refers to a breach of trust, and it reflects the influence of Germanic ideas about the breaking of the bond of trust between vassal and retainer, or *treubach*.[38] In the twelfth century the sense of the binding oath was a key reason for the seriousness with which treason was treated, and this is a theme of particular interest to this study.

The vocabulary of treason permeates Galbert of Bruges's account of the murder of Count Charles of Flanders. *Traditores*; *perfidi*; *infideles; pessimi*: such are the words used by Galbert to denote the impious traitors who committed treason on 2 March 1127, when they assassinated their count, Charles 'the Good' of Flanders (1119-27). The count, who was hailed as an exemplar of chivalric deeds and virtues, including *largesse*,[39] was betrayed by his own men, who transgressed their oaths of loyalty and flew in the face of religious codes of

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[37] *Glanville*, I.2.
[38] J.G.Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1970), p.3; R.F.Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp.10-11.
[39] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.6.

conduct, killing their lord while he was praying and giving alms, during the time of Lent, and in a holy place of worship.[40] From the beginning of the work, the piety of the count is set against the evil nature of the traitors. The plot to kill Charles was led by the Erembald clan, at the head of which were Bertulf the provost, and his nephews, Isaac the chamberlain, and Borsiard, who swore together on 1 March 1127 to betray the count.[41] Their breach of loyalty is highlighted by Galbert:

> Quem homines suae pacis super illum magnificantes supplantationes tradiderunt, ut in psalmo: 'Etenim homo pacis meae, qui edebat panes meos, magnificavit super me supplantationem'.
>
> But the men whom he trusted tripped him up and betrayed him, as it is said in the Psalm:[42] "Why, my own intimate friend, who shared my bread, has lifted his heel to trip me up".[43]

What particularly provokes Galbert is the breaking of faith with the trusting count. The breaking of an oath of loyalty is a key part of the definition of treason. Yet as I will demonstrate, the primacy of the oath actually complicates charges of treason in some circumstances.

Galbert provides clear examples of the corruption of the traitors. He initially assigns the blame to the Erembald clan, and portrays these men who engineered the death of the good count as characters who are driven by evil instincts:

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[40] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.6. Storming churches was a specific offence in old Flemish law: see Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, p.62. Walter of Thérouanne calls the act 'perverse': 'Vita Karoli Comitis Flandriae', ed. R.Köpke, MGH SS 12, 537-61, c.43.
[41] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.11.
[42] Psalm 40:10.
[43] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.6.

Canes immundi, demonio pleni, servi dominum suum jugulaverunt. Nemo quippe ita est absurdus, ita hebes, ita stolidus, qui non adjudicaret traditores illos penis infimis et inauditis; qui inaudita traditione dominum suum, ipsi servi qui observasse debuerant, disperdiderunt.

Those foul dogs, full of the demon, those serfs, murdered their lord! Certainly there is no one so senseless, so stupid and obtuse, as not to sentence those traitors to the vilest and most unheard-of punishments, those serfs who by unheard-of treachery[44] did away with their lord, the very one whom they should most have protected.[45]

The villainy of the traitors is made clear and the vocabulary employed by Galbert is hard-line: the men are reduced to the base level of the beasts and churls encountered earlier in the chivalric romances as their action is likened to that of dogs. Yet these men are wilfully evil: they are fully culpable, as they were aware of their deeds, and Galbert significantly assumes that others share his desire for retribution when he asserts that no sensible person would dispute the punishment justified by this terrible act of treason. Furthermore Simon of Vermandois, bishop of Noyon-Tournai (1123-46), who was a brother of the count's wife, excommunicated all those guilty of the sacrilege and treachery, and all those conspiring with them in their evil.[46] These men would be marked with the stigma of treachery: such villainy is thus 'catching', and a charge of treason may be applied to anyone who contributes in any way to the occurrence of these acts.

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[44] In fact, Charles's father was killed in the same way. Themard, the castellan of Bourbourg, was also killed on 2 March 1127, and dismembered: *De multro*, c.16; see also Suger, *Vie de Louis*, c.17 (discussed below).
[45] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.6; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, pp.94-5.
[46] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.21; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, pp.136-7.

It seems that the traitors are relatively easy to define, and that their guilt is indisputable. The description of the men as 'servi' emphasises their low status, perhaps evoking an expectation of low-down behaviour similar to that which we encountered earlier in the romances in relation to the churls. Yet the reference is even more pertinent because of the fact that much of the unrest which ended in the killing of Charles centred on a dispute about servile origin. The Erembald clan had considerably raised their social position over recent years and their political influence was now great. The provost Bertulf was keen to protect his family. His brother Didier Hacket was in a highly influential position as castellan of Bruges, and the rivalry which surrounded high-ranking court positions was great, as demonstrated above.[47] The fear that the count was going to disclose the servile status of the family at his Easter court is one of the key factors which seems to have driven the Erembalds to the deed of treason.[48] Although Count Charles was within his rights to go ahead with this deed, servile status was a sensitive issue and by applying this law at a time of political and legal turbulence, Count Charles risked provoking the Erembalds.[49] Nevertheless Galbert portrays not the vulnerability of the Erembald clan, but the justness of Charles's intention to disclose their servile status as a part of his desire to

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[47] See Chapter One.

[48] According to Galbert of Bruges, the count's awareness of their servile status was raised by a dispute which occurred, during which one knight declined to fight the other in single combat by arguing that his opponent was not of equal status: see Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.7; also Walter of Thérouanne, 'Vita Karoli', c.15; Suger, *Vie de Louis,* c.30; Herman of Tournai, 'Liber de restauratione', c.28; on this rule see R.Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford, 1986), pp.109-110.

[49] Van Caenegem, 'Law and Power', pp.153, 167-8.

establish proper order in his lands.[50] Bertulf is portrayed as arrogant,[51] like the villainous knights of chivalric romances, and his progression to an elevated status is undermined by Galbert, in the description of the unnatural and adulterous origins of his family.[52]

At first, then, the majority of the blame is apportioned to the Erembald family by Galbert of Bruges. Yet as the work progresses, it soon becomes apparent that these were not the only men who might be accused of treason. The strife was at least aggravated by an existing conflict between the Erembald clan and the Straten family, headed by Thancmar. In fact this clan, who were unpopular with the citizens of Bruges, increasingly take the blame for Charles's death in Galbert's account. When he relates the citizens' objection to the raising of standards by Thancmar's nephews on 19 March 1127, Galbert describes them as 'partly responsible' for the treachery ('quorum causa in parte traditio facta est'.[53] Furthermore the Erembalds took advantage of this public enemy factor, and attempted to blame Thancmar's family for the fact that they had been driven to commit the murder.[54] It seems that a charge of treason was not limited to arch-villains such as Bertulf and that the situation was complex.

The events of 1127-8 are a web of conflicting ambitions for power, conflicting loyalties, greed,[55] allegations of blame, and multiple betrayals.

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[50] Galbert, of Bruges, *De multro*, c.3; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, p.96.
[51] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.13; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, p.114.
[52] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.71. Erembald had an affair with the wife of his lord, Boldran the castellan. Their offspring included Bertulf and Hacket.
[53] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.45; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, p.182.
[54] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.45; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, p.183.
[55] Other crimes included the plundering of the castle and of the count's treasure. Despite the effectiveness of the laws governing pillaging which are mentioned earlier by Galbert, greedy

According to the inquest which was held in 1127, well over 100 men, most of whom were knights, were involved either with the actual murder of Charles and his fellows, or with the following events, which included aiding the traitors, and taking the count's booty.[56] Many of the baronage were involved in the treachery; and they later betrayed first the traitors, and then William Clito, the first new count of Flanders to assume power after Charles's death. At this point it becomes clear that acts of treason were occurring on a number of levels.

In fact it seems that it was possible to commit treason against a recognised traitor. Robert the Young argued indignantly that Didier was a 'worse' traitor than himself:

> O Desideri, non es memor, quod tu hactenus nobis consuluisti tradere dominum consulem? ... O utinam liceret mihi exire! ad singulare bellum te evocarem. Deum testor quod tu magis sis traditor quam nos eo quod olim dominum, modo nos tradidisti.
>
> Oh Didier, Don't you remember that you once advised us to betray the lord count? ... Oh, If I could only get out, I would challenge you to single combat! God be my witness that you are more of a traitor than we because formerly you betrayed your lord and now you betray us.[57]

It appears that it is the breach of loyalty which was the most important part of an act of treason. Robert's statement suggests that it is possible for a traitor to commit further acts of treason by betraying one's new associates, even if they are traitors. The importance of bonds of loyalty is further emphasised by the fact

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bands of plunderers seemed as eager to turn this time of turmoil into an opportunity for financial gain as the nobility were to exploit its potential for political advancement. See, for example, Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.33, c.41.

[56] 'They accused 125 among us and 37 at Aardenburg, together with Lambert [brother of Bertulf], whom they had marked with the stigma of treachery': Galbert of Burges, *De multro*, c.87; Baldwin of Avesnes, 'Chronicon Hanoniense', ed. I.Heller, MGH SS 25, 441-3.

[57] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.44; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, pp.181-2.

that in the twelfth century the oath of fealty was two-way: a lord was accountable to his vassals just as they were accountable to him,[58] and knights did have the facility to formally withdraw their allegiance if they felt that a lord was no longer fulfilling his own obligations. In front of a public gathering, the rod or 'festuca' which symbolised vassalage was ceremonially broken or thrown away ('exfestucatio').[59] So treason is wrong, even when committed against villains by their vassals, because faith has still been pledged and then broken. To plot rebellion secretly and wilfully was one of the most heinous crimes knights could commit. In accordance with these standards, and in spite of his own preferences, Galbert argues that even the men who secretly let the king and his army enter Ypres were traitors to their lord, William of Ypres, who was another claimant to the countship.[60] Again, despite Clito's dishonourable conduct and oppressive behaviour, and Thierry of Alsace's justness and his legitimate right to the countship, Galbert even links the anniversary of the death of the traitors who were precipitated from the castle walls with the death of those by whose 'counsel and treachery' Thierry was 'forcibly put in the place of William the Norman', thus linking these men in their treachery.[61] Traitors are traitors by means of the act of breaking their oaths of loyalty, regardless of to whom these tend.

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[58] Van Caenegem, 'Law and Power', pp.156-7, 163.
[59] When the citizens summoned William Clito to a peaceful court at Ypres because he had broken his promises to scrap certain tolls and rents, and to uphold the peace, but the count arrived with a band of warriors, homage to him was formally rejected in this way: Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.95; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, p.270. A similar act occurs in c.38.
[60] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.79.
[61] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.110.

Treason is similarly associated with a breach of fealty to a feudal superior in chivalric romances. The term 'traïson' occurs here in a number of different contexts, which vary from sleeping with a lord's wife, or covertly attacking his lands, to the breaking of promises to loved ones. I want now to examine some instances of treason in chivalric romances, in order to see how far they can be related to contemporary ideas about treason, and the emphasis on bonds of loyalty.

We have seen in *Le Chevalier au Lion* that Yvain was formally accused of treachery by a maiden who travelled from his wife's court, when he failed to return to her as he had promised to do. Later in the story Yvain discovers that the maid Lunete has been imprisoned and is sentenced to die by burning or hanging, for committing 'traïson' against her lady.[62] Angry as a result of Yvain's actions, his wife Laudine feels that she has been deceived by Lunete, who manipulated the initial meeting between Yvain and Laudine. A seneschal (who is himself described as 'uns traïtres', l.3662) has accused Lunete in public of betraying her lady. Lunete has denied the charge of treason, but she is unable to find a knight to represent her in judicial combat.[63] Yvain's failure to return to his wife on time may on the surface appear a trivial offence when compared with the murder of a count, or even the seduction of a lord's wife. Yet this episode is presented by

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[62] *Le Chevalier au Lion*, l.3598.
[63] *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ll.3661-85.

Chrétien de Troyes in the same terms as a real accusation of treason, and the episode follows the same procedures as a contemporary trial by duel.[64]

The judicial duel was closely linked with accusations of treason and the breaking of agreements, including truces,[65] as it was particularly appropriate in situations in which the faithfulness of the oral testimony of the accused was questionable. In the case of Lunete, the very accusation of treason casts doubt on her trustworthiness. A battle between nobles was an accepted alternative, and because she is a woman Lunete is able to appoint a champion to fight in her place. The formal accusation of treason by the seneschal, her rejection of that accusation, and the method of punishment intended for Lunete, all reflect contemporary legal procedures. When Yvain finally rescues Lunete by defeating her accusers in judicial combat, those who falsely accused Lunete are themselves burned upon the pyre as traitors.[66] So Yvain's breaking of a pledge to his lady is seen as a very real breach of contract, and it has serious reverberations for all involved.

The taking of oaths in chivalric romances makes all the more apparent the importance of bonds of loyalty. Trials by combat occur in many narrative works from the twelfth century as a way of ascertaining guilt, but as Bloch illustrated so well for the *Morte Artu*, the character of some of the oaths made

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[64] Trial by combat was in fact one of the key ways by which guilt or innocence was established up to the twelfth century, although during this century justice became of an increasingly inquisitorial nature. The appointing of a personal set of aldermen as judges by Philip of Alsace marked a turning-point for lay power in his region. Philip of Flanders made fines an important part of punishment: Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, pp.95, 188-9, 324-6.
[65] Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*, pp.106-8.
[66] *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ll.4564-9.

can create a sense of unease.[67] It is time now to consider two examples of the ambiguous oath, in order to see what they reveal about attitudes to treason.

A particularly interesting example of oath-taking occurs in the versions of the Tristan legend written by Béroul and Thomas of England.[68] Tristan, the king's nephew, and Ysolde, the king's wife, have committed an acute act of treason by sleeping together.[69] Eventually Ysolde is forced to respond to a formal charge of treason, and she takes an oath. In Béroul's version, Ysolde's cunning and trickery are emphasised as she declares in public that the only men who have been between her legs are her husband Mark, and the leper who helped her across the river. The leper was, of course, Tristan in disguise: Ysolde's oath, although technically true, is deliberately ambiguous and intentionally misleading.[70] Although this form of secular justice was closely linked with the judgement of God, and the duel was also perceived as a vessel for divine intervention, in the twelfth century it began to lose favour.[71] False testimony was treated harshly by leaders such as Philip of Flanders.[72] Nevertheless, Ysolde is vindicated as a result of her oath.

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[67] Bloch, *Medieval French Literature*, pp.10-11, 25-32.

[68] H.Newstead argues that comedy and sympathy are generated in the *Tristan* stories of Béroul and Thomas through the influence of fabliaux, and the motif of the falsely accused queen: 'The Equivocal Oath in the Tristan Legend', *Mélanges offers à Rita Lejeune*, II (Gembloux, 1969), pp.1077-85.

[69] In 1174 Philip of Flanders executed the man who had liasons with his wife, Elizabeth of Vermandois.

[70] It is worth noting that Arthur's court is seen as representative of justice, and is called upon by Ysolde to be present at her oath-taking: *Tristan*, ll.3257-64.

[71] Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*, pp.115-7. The alderman's truth brought in by Philip of Flanders was not debatable: Van Caenegem, 'Law and Power', pp.157-62.

[72] Philip imposed heavy fines for this crime: Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, p.132. In 'Glanville', the false swearing of oaths is punished by the removal of property, and a prison sentence: 'Glanville', II.7; trans. Douglas and Greenaway, p.470.

In Thomas of Britain's version of the Tristan legend (c.1160), the importance of bonds of loyalty is made all the more conspicuous when Ysolde's maid Bringvain openly accuses her lady of being a liar and faithbreaker.[73] Furthermore Bringvain highlights the importance of the oath of fealty and loyalty which she herself owes to the king: 'lijance e lealté vus dei/ e fiance e ferm'amur/ de vostre cors e de vostre honur'.[74] Bringvain also accuses Tristan of being a trothbreaker ('parjure', l.1277), and accuses him of treason in espousing her to a coward.[75] Yet Ysolde responds to Bringvain that she had counselled her in her actions, and was thus a party to the treason. Complex notions of degrees of villainy are thus in operation, but there is no doubt that 'traïson' itself is regarded as a serious charge, and that the conflict generated by these acts reflects the gravity with which treason was regarded in the twelfth century.

A similar act of treason occurs in Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrete*, and this too is dealt with in the customary manner. As Lancelot himself puts it, 'je sai de quauses, et de lois, et de plez, et de jugemanz: ne doit estre sanz seriemanz bataille de tel mescreance' ('I am knowledgeable in trials, laws, suits, and verdicts. When a man's word is doubted, an oath is required before the battle begins').[76] The hero Lancelot is committing an acute act of treason by having an affair with his lord's wife. When Meleagant swears his oath before

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[73] Thomas of Britain, *Tristan*, ll.1510-13.
[74] Thomas of Britain, *Tristan*, ll.1624-6.
[75] Thomas of Britain, *Tristan*, ll.1278-97.
[76] *Chevalier de la Charrete*, ll.4944-7; Kibler, p.268. See also 'Glanville', II.3; trans. Douglas and Greenaway, pp.465-6.

fighting Lancelot, it is flawed by one fact, which is that he has accused Kay, and not Lancelot, of the crime:

> Ensi m'aïst Dex et li sainz,
> Kex li seneschaus fu conpainz
> enuit la reïne, an son lit,
> et de li ot tot son delit. (ll.4967-70)
>
> As God and the saints are my witnesses, Kay the seneschal slept this night with the queen in her bed and took his full pleasure with her.[77]

On these technical grounds, Lancelot is able to formally deny the accusation before the fight begins. Yet the breach of faith remains apparent, and we are left with the uncomfortable awareness that Lancelot is instead guilty of betraying Arthur's trust in him. Only in naming Kay is Meleagant incorrect in the following assertion:

> Le roi Artus a Kex traï
> son seignor, qui tant le creoit
> que comandee li avoit
> la rien que plus ainme an cest monde. (ll.4854-7)
>
> Kay has betrayed King Arthur, his lord, who had faith enough in him that he entrusted to him what he most loved in this world.[78]

While these acts appear to us to be morally questionable, the actual format which they take is entirely legal and reflects contemporary traditions.

Furthermore, the effect of the treason of these protagonists is to some degree tempered by the emphasis on the love shared by the adulterous couples, and also by an emphasis on the treason committed by other characters, which

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[77] Kibler, p.268.
[78] Kibler, p.267.

generates sympathy for the lovers' plights.[79] The love of Tristan and Ysolde was of course generated accidentally by the love potion, and Béroul portrays the dwarf Frocin as an evil character who engineers the exposure of Tristan and Ysolde's affair out of sheer spite. Although the dwarf is uncovering the truth, so hated is this scheming character that this has no bearing on the narrator's portrayal of him. His plans to trap the lovers are despicable:

> Et il i est mot tost venuz
> (Dehez ait il!) conme boçuz.
> Li un des barons l'en acole,
> Li rois li mostre sa parole.
> Ha!.or oiez qel traïson
> Et con faite seducion
> A dit au roi cil nain Frocin!
> Dehé aient tuit cil devin!
> Qui porpensa tel felonie
> Con fist cist nain, qui Dex maudie? (ll.639-48)
>
> And he came very quickly (cursed be the hunchback!) One of the barons embraced him, and the king revealed why they had sent for him. Now hear what *treason* and corruption this dwarf Frocin proposed to the king. (Cursed be all such magicians! Whoever would have thought of such wickedness as this dwarf did? May God curse him!)[80]

The dwarf warrants suspicion on several counts: he is physically deformed, not only by being excessively small, but also by means of his hunchback, he performs supernatural acts, and above all he is by nature intent on wickedness. He is even accused of treason and as a result of this treatment, we are steered

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[79] N.J.Lacy has recently concluded that in *Tristan* truth is 'whatever Béroul and his heroes take it to be, whatever their enemies consider it *not* to be, and whatever God chooses to endorse': 'Where the Truth Lies: Fact and Belief in Béroul's *Tristran*', *Romance Philology*, 52 (1999), pp.1-9.
[80] Fedrick (trans.), *Tristan*, p.61.

into a negative judgement of the acts and the character of Frocin, and likely to focus less on the questionable actions of Tristan and Isolde.

The hunch-backed dwarf is not the only miscreant, as working in league with him are three barons, who are described as evil from their first introduction: 'A la cort avoit trois barons/ Ainz ne veïstes plus felons' (At the court there were three barons - you never saw more wicked men!)[81] Their desire to corner Tristan and Ysolde is put down to their jealousy and wickedness, rather than loyalty to the king. It seems here that accusations of treason are related to the intentions of the characters, and the truth of the love of the protagonists makes them worthy. In Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrete*, too, the accuser Meleagant is similarly presented as an arch-villain intent on evil, who has himself committed several treacherous acts, and who invites our censure. Lancelot is portrayed as a knight who paradoxically is faithfully serving his king by rescuing Guinevere, while at the same time betraying him.

Yet there is an episode at the beginning of the romance which may make it difficult to forget Lancelot's treason entirely: the episode of the cart. It is this very episode which gives the appellation 'de la charrete' to both Lancelot and the romance itself. The historicity of the romances may be further demonstrated by referring to this episode.

Near the beginning of the romance, Guinevere is abducted and Lancelot embarks on a mission to rescue her. On his journey he comes across a dwarf who is driving a cart. When Lancelot asks the dwarf, who is 'vile' and 'low-born'

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[81] Béroul, *Tristan*, ll.581-2; Fedrick (trans.), *Tristan*, p.60.

('cuiverz de pute orine', l.354),[82] for information regarding the queen, he is told to climb onto the cart. Yet Lancelot hesitates, and this is because the cart in this romance is a symbol of shame:

> ausi con li pilori sont,
> a ces qui murtre et larron sont,
> et a ces qui sont chanp cheü,
> et as larrons qui ont eü
> autrui avoir par larrecin
> ou tolu par force an chemin:
> qui a forfet estoit repris
> s'estoit sor la charrete mis
> et menez par totes les rues;
> s'avoit totes enors perdues,
> ne puis n'estoit a cort oïz,
> ne enorez ne conjoïz.
> Por ce qu'a cel tens furent tex
> les charretes, et si cruex,
> fu premiers dit: 'Quant tu verras
> charrete et tu l'ancontreras,
> fei croiz sor toi, et te sovaigne
> de Deu, que max ne t'an avaigne.' (ll.327-44)

> Like our pillories, that cart was for all criminals alike, for all thieves and murderers, for all those who had lost trials by combat, and for all those who had stolen another's possessions by larceny or snatched them by force on the highways. The guilty person was taken and made to mount in the cart and was led through every street; he had lost all his feudal rights and was never again heard at court, nor invited or honoured there. Since in those days carts were so dreadful, the saying first arose: 'Whenever you see a cart and cross its path, make the sign of the cross and remember God, so that evil will not befall you.[83]

Notably in this manuscript version of the text, the scribe (Guiot) appears to have deliberately omitted a reference to 'traïson', preferring instead to use 'larron' twice. It is possible that this is because he felt sure that otherwise Lancelot

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[82] Kibler, p.211.
[83] Kibler, p.211.

would be incriminated beyond repair.[84] Although Chrétien de Troyes describes the cart as if it were an unfamiliar phenomenon, it actually bears many similarities with the carts used to transport criminals in the twelfth century. Chrétien's cart is possibly an amalgamation of two types of punishment, the 'tumbril' (a type of ducking stool), and the gallows-cart.[85] His cart was used to transport - and parade - criminals in the twelfth century. The men who travelled in them would indeed have lost their rights, for they were proscribed, so that they were no longer under the protection of the law.[86]

Despite the lack of twelfth-century documentary evidence from France bemoaned by Shirt,[87] contemporary chronicles do actually provide evidence that this episode was based on contemporary practices. They too convey the cart as a means of shamefully transporting villains. The *Histoire des ducs de Normandie* tells how in 1202 King John took around 200 men prisoner after his success at Mirebeau, and had them placed in chains and transported on carts. The *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* also refers to this event, and makes it clear that John's treatment of the prisoners was villainous.[88] Another historical example of the use of the cart, and its connotations, occurs in Garnier's *Vie Saint Thomas* (c.1173-5).[89] According to Garnier's account, all 'robbers, murderers and secret

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[84] MS.C.(B.N.f.fr.794), used by Roques, omits the reference, which in MS.C. (B.N.f.fr.12560) appears as 'Qui traïson ou muerte fout': D.J.Shirt: 'Chrétien de Troyes and the Cart', *Studies in Medieval Literature and Language in Memory of Frederick Whitehead*, ed. W.Rothwell, W.R.J.Barron, D.Blamires, and L.Thorpe (Manchester, 1973), pp.279-301 (288-301).
[85] Shirt, 'Chrétien de Troyes and the Cart', pp.290-301.
[86] For more on the loss of rights see Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, pp.137-8.
[87] Shirt, 'Chrétien de Troyes and the Cart', pp.286-7.
[88] *Histoire des ducs*, pp.94-6; *Histoire*, ed. Meyer, II, ll.12507-12.
[89] Garnier of Pont-Sainte-Maxence, *La Vie*, ed. Walberg.

traitors' would be subject to mutilation and death, regardless of their kinsmen. Men caught stealing were subject to a law that required punishment, and Garnier describes the fate of deacons and priests whom Thomas had attempted to defend, but upon whom the king insisted on exercising his justice. Such men

> Careté mult suvent erent par le païs,
> As cunciles mené, la u lur ert asis
> U qu'il fussent desfaiz u penduz u ocis. (ll.1123-5)

> were very often taken about the country in carts, and brought before councils where they were sentenced to mutilation, hanging or death.[90]

So, even if Lancelot's *charrete* is not intended to emphasise his treason, clearly no knight desirous of a good reputation would wish to be associated with such a publicly recognised symbol of shame and dishonour as the cart.

In fact, having been associated with these criminal types, Lancelot becomes the 'knight of the cart' and afterwards endures the insults and jeers of the people, who assume that he is a criminal bound for execution. Moreover, the stigma of travelling in such a manner follows Lancelot when he enters lodgings, for when he sees Guinevere and nearly throws himself out of a window in despair, the hostess suggests that he is already damned for having travelled in the cart (ll.575-82). So even though Chrétien de Troyes presents Meleagant as the arch-villain, Lancelot's association with the cart, a historically recognised symbol of guilt, shame, and even fear, which was associated with a list of recognised offences, potentially serves as a reminder of his own culpability.

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[90] *Garnier's Becket*, trans. J.Shirley, p.31.

The works of Chrétien, Béroul and Galbert of Bruges highlight some of the difficulties which were associated with interpreting acts of treason. It seems that in their portrayal of difficult circumstances, the chivalric romances are highlighting the inability of the traditional system of oath-taking and trial by duel to recognise the importance of context and of intention. Yet they confirm that treason was a recognised form of villainy, and that it was liable to punishment. It is time now to investigate some of these forms of punishment in more detail.

5.iii Punishment

The punishment of villainy represents the meeting of ideology with law. As has already been revealed, acts of theft, murder, and treason were subject to the death penalty. Chrétien de Troyes allows his arch-villains no mercy; Galbert of Bruges makes clear that the traitors of Charles should suffer fates equal to the evilness of their deeds, referring to them as 'decollati, proscripti, banniti'; and however variously treason is interpreted in Béroul's *Tristan*, the punishment anticipated by the lovers bemoaning their fate is not in doubt: Ysolde claims in the hearing of Mark that the king would 'mistakenly' have her torn to pieces ('mon cors seret desmenbré tot', l.66) if he discovered their affair. So how exactly were opinions about villainy put into practice, and when was punishment affected by other issues? Exploring such questions reveals more about attitudes to villainy, and by extension the complex relationship between villainy, chivalry, and law.

In 1127 it was the barons who took on the duty of obtaining vengeance for Count Charles,[91] and they determined not to spare any of the guilty, intending to 'destroy them utterly'. This was the 'law of the siege': anyone who helped the besieged was subject to the judgement of the barons.[92] According to Galbert, the style of death of the traitors should match the gravity of the manner in which they went against their lord. As the execution of many of the traitors on 19 March 1127 proves, these intentions were fairly well satisfied.[93] The traitors met with a range of methods of violent punishment, including burning and hanging, decapitation, and drowning. In April of 1127 Eustace of Steerwoorde was burned to ashes, and the count gave protection to his killers.[94] Many of these methods were common forms of punishment at the time and were considered dishonourable forms of death.

One of the most striking characteristics of these particular capital punishments was the element of public involvement. It has already been noted that in the twelfth century crime was considered to be an offence against public welfare: the punishment of crime also reflected this, and many of the culprits were mobbed by the crowds or shamed publicly. Fromold, the 'most evil of Borsiard's serfs', was hanged in the market with his 'shameful parts' pointing at

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[91] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.31.
[92] Lambert, a vassal who voluntarily helped Borsiard, and was 'always up to some evil in his words and deeds, urging his lords on to all kinds of crime', was betrayed by Borsiard. He was kept in chains for barons to judge according to the law of the siege: Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.48.
[93] Not all of the criminals were punished by death, however. Some of those who had helped the besieged at Bruges argued that they had not been accused by law, and that they wanted the count's judgement upon them. This did not please Galbert, but it may have been part of a strategy for keeping peace: Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, pp.248-9.
[94] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.56.

the castle towards the traitors.[95] Guy of Steenvoorde was defeated in combat and hanged on 11 April 1127.[96] According to Galbert he was placed on the wheel of a cart and was then hung on a tree alongside his wife's uncle, the provost, as if still conspiring with him.

This is how some of the traitors and their accomplices met the deaths. But what of the arch-villains, Isaac, Bertulf, and Borsiard? Isaac attempted to escape to a monastery,[97] but he was seized, stripped of his monk's clothes, and according to Walter of Thérouanne, dragged naked to the city where the citizens demanded his death; he was finally killed by hanging.[98] Bertulf was executed on 11 April 1127 by William of Ypres, Clito's rival to the countship. William of Ypres had previously been in league with Bertulf, and Galbert alleges that he killed Bertulf in this way for the sake of his own reputation: when William asked for names of other traitors, the provost replied 'Aeque tu, sicut et ego, nosti' ('you know as well as I!').[99] At this point William demanded his death. Bertulf was mocked, and pelted with stones and mud, and was hanged in the market-place at Ypres 'like a thief or robber' and, as described above, exposed shamefully afterwards. The lack of pity shown to him was understandable in Galbert's eyes, and clearly those of the public too.

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[95] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.29.
[96] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.58.
[97] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.39.
[98] Walter of Thérouanne, 'Vita Karoli', c.35; Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.48.
[99] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.57.

The evil Borsiard was bound to a wheel on a tree.[100] In Walter of Thérouanne's account, Borsiard's penitence moved people to pity, and he begged to have his hands cut off: this was also a recognised punishment, which punished the hand which did the deed.[101] Yet despite the expressions of regret of some men, they were not officially absolved, and they were buried outside the cemetery. Bertulf, who earlier had denied his part in the treachery,[102] having fled the castle on 17 March now travelled 'with bare feet, suffering voluntarily punishments for his sins so that God might forgive such a great sinner the crime he had committed against the pious count';[103] but still he met a shameful death as a man directly guilty of an act of treason.

Thus many of the traitors eventually suffered shameful deaths. While a majority of the methods used were familiar, one form of punishment is believed to have been unusual in its time: 'precipitation', or the throwing of men to their deaths, is believed by some to have been a Norman custom.[104] On 19 April 1127 the remaining besieged men surrendered, and were thrown into prison. Some men wept when they saw this, for the Erembalds were their lords. This highlights again the difficulties caused by conflicting bonds of faith and loyalty. Yet the imprisoned men had themselves broken oaths of loyalty to their count. Having been promised mercy by the king and the count, these men were

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[100] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.80.
[101] Walter of Thérouanne, 'Vita Karoli', c.42; Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, pp.192-3.
[102] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, cc.20, 21.
[103] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.46, pp.185-6.
[104] Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, p.232.

precipitated from the walls on 5 May.[105] According to Galbert, this punishment reflected the previous murder of Boldran by the adulterous Erembald, who threw him overboard a ship. This act is now symbolically 'avenged' by the fact that Erembald's successors are themselves precipitated from the battlements,[106] plunging from arrogance and ambition to fear and vulnerability, and eventually to their deaths.

Yet this is not the only report of death by such means, for there is another interesting reference to precipitation in *Cligés.* Fenice and Cligés perform the same act of treason as Lancelot and Guinevere, by having an adulterous affair behind the back of Alis, who is Fenice's husband, and Cligés's uncle and overlord. The affair is actually referred to as 'traïson' (l.6651), and Fenice even simulates death so that she may begin a new life with her lover. Their love is, however, portrayed by both Cligés and Fenice as worthy, unlike the affair of Tristan and Ysolde, which they both refer to as having been 'dishonourable'.[107] In fact the cuckolded lord Alis is portrayed as a villain, because he originally broke his oath not to get married and by doing so usurped Cligés's entitlement to rulership. As a result of this breach of faith by Alis, Cligés's servant John can refuse to commit the 'treachery' of revealing his master's whereabouts to Alis. The villains here are not Cligés and Fenice, but the lord himself, and the 'wicked barons' who advised him to marry. Also culpable are the physicians who subject Fenice to the most cruel forms of torture in an attempt to rouse her from her

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[105] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.81.
[106] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.72.
[107] *Cligés*, ll.5199-203, 5250-6.

simulated death. These doctors are in fact thrown out of the windows for their efforts. Again, the historicity behind an apparently fantastic source is notable. The extreme act of precipitation confirms them as criminals deserving of execution, in the manner recognised historically and actually used in the punishment of the traitors who murdered the count of Flanders.

So according to secular judgement, the violent deaths of these traitors were clearly justified, and the villainous acts of the criminals were recalled in the manner of their punishment. An episode in Abbot Suger's biography of King Louis VI exemplifies nicely the sense of the justness of acts of violence against enemies who are perceived as true villains. Suger relates here a sordid act of treason ('prodicione') which occurred around May 1109 at La Roche, during which Guy, a lord of La Roche, was beheaded by his brother-in-law William while he was in church. Having slain Guy with a sword, William then fatally wounded his wife and killed their children. The deed caused outrage far and wide, and Suger describes in detail what happened to this 'traitor beyond compare' when revenge was taken on William by the men of the Vexin, in a passage which is worth citing at length:

> Gladiis eos aggrediuntur, impios pie trucidant, membris emutilant, alios dulcissime eviscerant et quicquid crudelius mitius reputantes in eos exaggerant. Nec discredendum est divinam manum tam celerem maturasse ultionem, cum et per fenestras vivi aut mortui proitiuntur et innumeris sagittis hiriciorum more hispisdi, cuspidibus lancearum in aere vacantes, ac si eos terra reitiat, vibrantur. Hanc autem inusitato facto inusitatam repperiunt ultionem, quod, quia vecors vivus fuerat, mortuus est excordatus. Cor siquidem extis ereptum, fraude et iniquitate turgidum palo imponunt, ad representandam iniquitatis vindictam multis diebus certo in loco infigunt.

> Attacking them with swords, they piously slaughtered the impious, mutilated the limbs of some, disembowelled others with great pleasure, and piled even greater cruelty upon them, considering it still too kind. No one should doubt that the hand of God sped so swift a revenge when both the living and the dead were thrown through the windows. Bristling with countless arrows like hedgehogs, their bodies stopped short in the air, vibrating on the sharp points of lances as if the ground itself rejected them. The French hit upon the following unusual revenge for William's deed. When alive he had lacked a brain, and now that he was dead he lacked a heart, for they ripped it from his entrails and impaled it on a stake, swollen as it was with fraud and evil. They left it set up in a conspicuous place for many days to make public their revenge for this wickedness.[108]

William is presented as an absolute villain, and the revenge taken against him was as public as it was violent. The corpses of William and his companions were then tied to pieces of fencing and put into the Seine, so that they would now 'infect' Normandy with their filth. Suger's dramatic portrayal relishes the details of his punishment, and presents it as logically reflecting the evil nature and deeds of the culprit: the punishment fits the crime.

Notwithstanding political biases,[109] and the fact that throughout the text Suger presents Louis VI as the lawful bringer of order and suppresser of the unjust, notably the punishment was also supported by God: indeed, those who exact revenge upon William are 'pious', and it is even acceptable for them to take pleasure in the violent acts by which they justly right the wrongs represented by this evil figure. As demonstrated above, having shown Charles's good deeds

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[108] Suger, *Vie de Louis*, c.17, pp.120-1; *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Cusimano and Moorhead, p.80.

[109] Abbot Suger had a very significant political role during the reign of King Louis VI: for an account of Suger's political life see L.Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis: Church and State in Early Twelfth-Century France* (London, 1998), esp. pp.85-178.

as a count, and his popularity,[110] Galbert of Bruges similarly emphasised the stupidity and cruelty of Charles's evil traitors, which thus justified their violent and public punishment. Attitudes to villains may be partly driven by alliances, but the horror felt by the people toward such men in the different accounts is universal, and seems to be reflected both in their absolute censure and in the violent and public punishments exacted upon them. These enemies are enemies of God, and their avengers are the champions of God.

For the murder of Charles was itself a crime against God. Secular justice was seen to be an extension of divine law, and at many points the punishments wrought upon the traitors are seen to be the work of God.[111] Notably Herman of Tournai saw the death of Bertulf as divine judgement when he described the dishonourable seizing and hanging of the provost.[112] The support of God can be seen as an important element of acts of and attitudes to villainy, and in situations of treason the villainy involves the immoral transgression of the holy order as well as the secular order. As Galbert put it, 'Let no one renounce or betray earthly rulers whom we are bound to believe were placed over us by the ordinance of God'.[113] The punishment of villainy by secular means is thus also endorsed by God.[114]

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[110] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, cc.4-6; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, pp.87-94.

[111] God was seen to be in charge of many of the acts of vengeance, which he alone 'wrought against those barons of the land whom He has exterminated from this world by the punishment of death' (*De multro*, Prologue). These included the fates of Walter of Vladslo, who had a horsing accident (c.89) and Baldwin of Aalst who had a bizarre accident while blowing a horn (c.91). If men ignore God's mercy or his advice, Galbert is saying, they are culpable and will be punished either by direct acts of God, or by God working through men.

[112] Herman of Tournai, 'Liber de restauratione', c.35.

[113] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, Prologue.

[114] Bloch, *Medieval French Literature*, pp.18-22, 24.

Yet divine mercy is also significant in contemporary accounts of the punishment of villainy. Notably God can be merciful when his mercy is deserved: Galbert tells us that God forgave Charles's own sins, and that he obtained eternal salvation.[115] Clearly he was redeemed by his chivalrous life as leader of the people of Flanders. Lambert of Aardenburg was cleared of his part in the treason by the ordeal of hot iron, and by this we are to understand that he was given a second chance.[116]

The fates of traitors in chivalric romances appear to tally with those of chronicles. In *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, the arch-villain Meleagant's actions are as ill-advised as those of William and Bertulf, and like those characters he meets a well-deserved death. No pity is felt for Meleagant, for his censure is universal. Correspondingly, Lancelot is seen to have good on his side and people rejoice at his victory (ll.7090-7). It seems that in both chronicles and chivalric romances, intention is sometimes taken into account. Contemporary accounts represent God's judgement of acts of villainy and piety in terms of black and white in justifying the deaths of treacherous villains, but they still uphold the value of repentance and show God to be merciful as well as just to some who have seen and reformed their villainous ways. Thus both literary and non-literary

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[115] 'Et quamvis olim peccator et criminosus fuerit, in fine vitae bonae et salutem animae perpetuam': Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.6; Ross (trans.), *The Murder*, p.94

[116] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.105. When Lambert then committed another sin by unfairly besieging a mere handful of men with 3000 of his own, he died on 30 April 1128 'because' through such an action he had ignored God's mercy and therefore deserved to die: Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.108.

works reflect shared notions of the moral and spiritual nature of villainy, and its rightful punishments.

I wish to conclude this chapter by considering two final examples of treason, one from a chronicle and one from a romance. Both of these examples involve sieges, and they emphasise key elements which have been discussed here, including the singular importance of the oath, and the punishment of traitors. The siege is a key part of the military history of the twelfth century. As castles became stronger and more numerous, they became the focal points of military endeavours.[117] Consequently the siege became one of the most common methods of warfare, more popular in fact than outright battle. Interestingly, sieges were not periods of anarchy, but were bound by codes of behaviour, including certain conventions regarding the rules of surrender and the treatment of prisoners.[118] Where killing occurred, it was often of a public and ritualised nature. As prolonged sieges could be detrimental to either side, the besieged or the besiegers, due to a lack of supplies and the spread of diseases, the making of agreements was common; so too were bribery and trickery. Oaths made between the parties are of particular interest in this context.

The first example, taken from the *Historia rerum Anglicarum* of William of Newburgh (b.c.1135-6), illustrates the importance of the oath made between

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[117] This is why restrictions on castle-building were enforced: Van Caenegem, *Geschiedenis*, pp.180, 240, 290 (n.5).

[118] J.Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp.296-334; R.Rogers, *Latin Siege Warfare in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1992). Note the 'right of storm' of besiegers, whereby if reasonable terms were offered to and refused by the besieged, they were then considered to be at the mercy of their attackers (see also Alexander's request of the captured traitors in *Cligés*, below).

warring parties, and describes a dispute which occurred between Philip of Flanders and King Louis regarding the correct treatment of the men they were besieging at Rouen in 1174.[119] Louis commanded that on 10 August, which was the feast of St Lawrence, no fighting should occur, in order that celebrations might take place.[120] We have already noted that fighting was restricted on holy days: but in this particular instance when the festivities were underway, the besiegers were angered by the jubilance of the besieged revellers inside the castle, taking this to be a gesture of insolence toward them. At this point Philip of Flanders suggested to Louis that they launch a surprise attack on the fortification. Apparently he justified his request with the comment 'dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat?' ('who asks if it be valour or deceit in an enemy?')[121] It is useful to note that a similar statement to Philip's can be found in Gerald of Wales's *Topographia Hibernica*, and it comes from Virgil's *Aeneid*.[122] Gerald is describing the treachery of the Irish race,[123] and he makes the following comments:

> Praeterea, prae omni alia gente proditionibus semper insistunt ... fidem datam nemini servant... Haec enim horum sententia;

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[119] William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, in *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, I, ed.R.Howlett (London, 1884), II.36, pp.190-4.
[120] Respect for holy occasions was not always shown: the traitors in Galbert of Bruges who were besieged were, to their surprise, attacked on a Sunday before the barons left to see the king regarding the appointment of the new count: *De multro*, c.47. The traitors themselves attacked the castle on 3 April 1127 - Easter Sunday -'with no faith or reverence' and they received communion, much to Galbert's disgust: Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.54.
[121] William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum*, p.193.
[122] Virgil, *Aeneid*, II, 390.
[123] Gillingham shows how the change in Anglo-Norman attitudes to chivalric mercy, fostered by the decrease in slavery due to the improved economy, and the development of weaponry, particularly armour, which allowed for the defeat of men without their inevitable death, led to the depiction of the Celts, who had not undergone such changes, as beasts and villainous barbarians: 'Conquering the Barbarians', pp.41-58. In this way the Celts represented a villainy from which knights distanced themselves ideologically.

> 'Dolus, an virtus; quis in hoste requirat?' (c.21)
>
> Moreover, above all other peoples they always practise treachery ... when they give their word to anyone, they do not keep it ... For this is their principle: 'Who asks of an enemy whether he employs guile or virtue?'[124]

Philip of Flanders is thus suggesting to Louis that enmity negates chivalrous treatment.

At first Louis refused to break his truce agreement on the grounds of having given his word of honour, but then he was persuaded to go ahead with an attack. Yet according to William, it was King Louis who was held responsible for the dishonourable transgression of an agreement: 'personae regiae tam foedae praevaricationis macula plus adhaesit' ('the stain of such foul treachery is to be attached more to the person of the king himself'.)[125] So while the element of surprise was often used in such situations, and outright war did sometimes occur, still the breaking of an oath was seen to be a villainous action, even in a situation of suspended war. Trustworthiness is, like *largesse*, class-specific. It is not so much the act of violence itself as the fact that it went against what had been honourably agreed. Here oath-breaking has precedence over strategy.

How do these observations about treachery to lords and oath-breaking compare with the account of the treason of Count Angrés in *Cligés*? This episode presents an interesting mixture of mercy and punishment, and some

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[124] Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, in *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. Dimock, (RS: 5, 1867), dist.III, cc.20-21, pp.165-6; *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. J.O'Meara (London, 1951), pp.106-7. Gerald describes treachery as a contagious vice, which is capable of contaminating others: in this case, foreigners: dist.III, c.24, p.168. We might also recall Gerald's comments on mercy in his discussion of the behaviour of those at Waterford, noted above.
[125] William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum*, p.194.

intriguing definitions of treachery. It should be noted that in the description of this event Chrétien de Troyes may be re-telling the betrayal of Arthur in Wace's *Brut*, and that sieges do not occur often in works by Chrétien de Troyes. However, it contains many of the elements of contemporary attitudes and practices we have already seen, and as such is a suitable case study to draw together many of the ideas about treachery which have featured in this chapter.

An act of treachery occurs against King Arthur while he is away in Brittany: the count Angrés, whom Arthur had left in charge on the advice of his barons, has prepared himself to attack the king's lands. Arthur blames his barons, by whose advice he had entrusted his lands to the 'renegade', and Angrés is compared to Ganelon, the traitor of Roland, in order to demonstrate how villainous he is.[126] It is agreed that the count should be exiled and hunted down, and Arthur gathers a massive army from Brittany. Count Angrés, frightened of betrayal by the many who hate him, sacks London and flees. The king states his intention to take no ransom from the traitor but to hang him. Angrés is besieged at Windsor castle, and it is worth comparing this episode with the treatment of Count Charles's murderers; it also shares an interesting similarity with the episode at Rouen in 1174.

Arthur's army camp outside the castle, beyond the River Thames, and the besieged come down to the riverbank with an air of relaxation which enrages the

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[126] *La Chanson de Roland*: *The Song of Roland*, ed. and trans. G.S.Burgess (London, 1990), ll.1146-51.

newly knighted men, just as the jousting and dancing at Rouen enraged Philip of Flanders. Alexander, who is leading a band of warriors, exclaims to his men:

> Seignor, fet il, talanz m'est pris
> Que de l'escu et de la lance
> Aille a cez feire une acointance
> Qui devant moi behorder vienent.
> Bien voi que por mauvés me tienent
> Et po nos prisent, ce m'est vis,
> Quant behorder devant nos vis
> Sont ci venu tuit desarmé. (ll.1280-87)
>
> I am eager to take my shield and lance and go to meet those knights who have come to joust before us. I can clearly see, by the way they've come to joust so lightly armed within our sight, that they think us cowards and hold us in low esteem.[127]

Like Philip's men, Alexander's band attack the besieged knights, and many of them are killed by decapitation. However, Alexander takes four prisoners, and 'out of courtesy' offers them to the queen, who guards them closely 'as if they had already been charged with treason'. Although the punishment of death has already been pronounced on Angrés, as indeed it had in the case of Charles's murderers, Alexander delays for a decision regarding the fates of these men. He appears to do this for reasons of chivalric mercy, and he is portrayed as 'courteous and wise' for not giving them straight to the king, who would have had them burned or hanged immediately.

Finally the queen is forced to hand over the traitors, and the sentence of death is decided:

> Et el demain sont amassé
> Li boen chevallier, li leal,
> Devant le paveillioin real,
> Por droit et por jugemant dire

[127] Kibler, p.138.

A quel poinne et a quel martire
Li quatre traïtor morroient.
Li un dïent qu'escorchié soient,
Li autre qu'an les pande ou arde,
Et li rois meïsmes esgarde
Qu'an doit traïtor traïner. (ll.1414-23)

And the next day the good and faithful knights assembled in front of the royal tent to determine by lawful judgement the agony and torture by which the four traitors were to die. Some said that they should be flayed alive; others that they should be hanged or burned. The king himself maintained that traitors should be quartered.[128]

The act of quartering is then described in detail, as the men are 'ripped asunder' by four horses, and dragged through valleys, over hills and across fields. The king makes sure that this punishment can be seen from the castle; Angrés is enraged by this action, which was carried out so openly. There is an interesting combination of the chivalrous wish to protect knights from violent reactions, and the unanimous decision that they deserve a painful, public death.

The traitors remaining in the castle now feel that there is no way out of the situation: although they could hold the castle for a long time, they believe that Arthur will remain there for as long as they do. This leaves them with no option but to attack the army outside the castle. They secretly steal out of the castle at night, in the hope of taking their enemy by surprise. It is at this point, however, that their wrongful deeds are appropriately rewarded. For, with a little help from God, the armour of the traitors shines in the moonlight, alerting Arthur's men:

Cele nuit estoile ne lune
N'orent lor rais el ciel mostrez,

[128] Kibler, p.140.

Mes ainz qu'il venissent as trez,
Comança la lune a lever;
Et je cuit que por aus grever
Leva einz qu'ele ne soloit,
Et Dex, qui nuire lor voloit,
Enlumina la nuit oscure,
Car il n'avoit de lor ost cure,
Einz les haï por le pechié
Dom il estoient antechié.
Car traïtor et traïson
Het Dex plus qu'autre mesprison. (ll.1672-84)

> The moon and stars had not shown their light in the heavens that night but before the soldiers had reached the tents the moon began to rise. I think that it rose earlier than usual in order to confound them, and that God lit up the dark night because He wished to bring them harm and bore them no love; rather, He hated them for the sin by which they were corrupted, for God hates traitors and treason more than any other iniquity.[129]

God is on the side of Arthur and Alexander, just as he was on the side of Charles the Good in his punishment of the count's traitors. The men on guard spot the traitors and raise the alarm. As Suger relished the slaughter of William, so Chrétien appears to relish the descriptions of Alexander's bloody killing of the traitors during the attack, and the *largesse* with which they issued blows.[130]

His trickery having failed, Angrés runs back into castle, and Alexander then decides to adopt the armour of the traitors and steal into the castle. Now Alexander is the beguiler: after tricking the porter they get inside the castle and begin to rush at the unarmed men. The total reversal of the deception is encapsulated in the wonderfully ironic statement made by the traitors: 'Traï! traï!' ('We've been betrayed!). Thus in some situations of treason, it is again

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[129] Kibler, p.143.
[130] *Cligés*, ll.1766-8.

acceptable for avengers to respond to villains with strategic 'villainy'. In a similar fashion it was acceptable for the baron at Bruges to lie to the traitors by telling them that they would be treated mercifully.[131]

In *Cligés* the count's villainy and the opposition of chivalry and villainy are made absolute when he fights Alexander, and his fine qualities as a knight are negated by his villainous attitude:

> Mes de grant force estoit li cuens
> Et chevaliers hardiz et buens,
> Que el siegle meillor n'eüst,
> Se fel et traïtres ne fust.
> ... Mes ce que li cuens avoit tort
> Li grieve formant et anpire. (ll.1887-99)

> But the count was strong, and a bold and mighty knight: had he not been a wicked traitor, there would have been no finer knight in all the world ... Yet because the count was in the wrong he found himself in a perilous position.[132]

The count's men are being beheaded and mutilated; and finally hearing himself accused of treason, the count flees to the keep. Alexander captures him, however, and the prisoners are led off in disgrace. The prisoners plead that they have their heads cut off immediately; but they are refused, just as so many prisoners were refused their pleas in Galbert's account. Alexander tells the prisoners that if they plead for mercy from the king, he will guarantee the safety of all except the count:

> 'Alez,' fet il, 'jel vos comant,

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[131] The method of duping of the besieged in *Cligés* is also justified in terms of the difficulty of getting into the castle. The trickery in the siege reflects what appears to have been a genuine problem: see Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, p.129. Arthur offers an exquisite, finely wrought gold cup as reward to whoever can breach the walls of the castle. The breaching of the castle and the surprise attack on the unarmed enemy inside is similar to the attack on the beseiged at Bruges: Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.41.
[132] Kibler, p.146.

A mon seignor isnelemant,
Si vos metez an sa merci.
Nus (fors le conte qui est ci)
De vos n'i a mort desservie.
Ja n'i perdoiz manbre ne vie,
Sa an sa merci vos metez.' (ll.2137-43)

'I command you to go to my lord and throw yourselves at his mercy,' he said, 'and I offer you my safe conduct. The only one among you who deserves to die is the count here. You will not lose life or limb if you throw yourselves at my lord's mercy.'[133]

The count in *Cligés* is immediately put to death while his men are spared. This is not just because the count represents the most danger, but also because he is one who is morally beyond salvation. This episode reiterates many of the issues surrounding villainy, treason, and punishment engaged with in this chapter. Accounts of villainy in chivalric romances and chronicle accounts share many similarities, and they reflect contemporary beliefs and practices.

Conclusions

The study of villainy reveals that serious acts of villainy often directly oppose the qualities of chivalrous knights which were being promoted in the twelfth century. Serious forms of villainy, such as treason, were considered to be catching, and could taint a knight by association. There is no shortage of anti-chivalry in chivalric romances and in chronicles, and what constitutes masculine virtue is often highlighted by examples of its opposite. Accounts of villainy in chivalric romances relate closely to what was legally considered criminal, and

[133] Kibler, p.149.

overall there is a high degree of correlation between attitudes to villainy in chivalric romances and chronicles, and contemporary legal practices.

The study of treason highlights the primacy of the feudal pledge in twelfth-century society. It reveals that even those accounts of treason in chivalric romances which appear to be trivial were in fact expressed within the legal terms of a breach of loyalty. By highlighting the problematic nature of oaths, chivalric romances may reflect the trend towards inquest which was occurring under the auspices of Philip of Flanders, among others. The study shows that conduct in these situations could be complicated by considerations of knightly mercy, kinship ties, and the obligations of loyalty. Oaths were of such fundamental importance that the breaking of pledges, even to an enemy, could result in criticism.

Methods of punishment reflected the seriousness with which villainy was regarded. Forms of punishment for treason were most usually fatal, and often symbolic. When villainous knights commit crimes against their fellows, they commit crimes against the ideologies of chivalry which they are supposed to uphold; and also they commit crimes against God. The role of God in assigning punishments to traitors and other villains is accepted in all of the works studied.

Codes of chivalry require that villainy is attended to. Actual villainy is seen as ultimately an issue of choice (Galbert's 'free will'),[134] and reflects badly

[134] Galbert of Bruges, *De multro*, c.11.

upon a knight's nature. Overall, there is a sense of superiority and justice which links these authors in their defeat of villainy.

Conclusion

The study of chivalry has been subject to changing approaches. The easy and unselfconscious reliance on romance as a mirror of contemporary reality, characteristic of some earlier studies of chivalry,[1] has been challenged more recently by an insistence on the 'self-reflexiveness' of romances as literary artefacts, whose value as historical evidence is compromised by the artistic conceptions of their authors. This thesis has suggested a more balanced approach to the study of chivalric ideals and institutions, by investigating their representation in a wide range of contemporary genres, in the belief that by carrying out this detailed comparative work we can achieve a more accurate picture of the significance of chivalric ideals in twelfth-century society. In the process, this study has discovered some striking points of similarity between documents which are not usually studied together.

I have focused in the thesis on a number of important chivalric ideals and practices, and - in the case of villainy - on the chivalric anti-ideal. As we have seen, chivalric ideals and practices as represented in romance were not free-floating, but an important part of noble life in the twelfth century, permeating society, engaging the concerns of different social groups among the nobility (and the clergy), and generating and provoking reactions, which were sometimes, but not always, favourable. The interest in chivalric ideals and activities is that they could serve to bolster the identity of knights as a distinctive social group, whilst

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[1] For example, Gautier, *Chivalry.*

the promotion of chivalric practices by leading figures, and the consideration given to the ideals in a wide range of contemporary discourses, show the political and ideological importance of chivalric ideals in the twelfth century.

The court was the focal point of noble life in twelfth-century northern France, and is presented as the key forum for chivalric gatherings in romances. The analysis of ceremonial court gatherings in the first chapter showed that these high profile occasions provided an opportunity for court leaders to publicly assert power and status, and a comparative study of the court in chronicle accounts and chivalric romances revealed that the symbolism and display at court gatherings had similar functions. In addition the court, in both literary and historical accounts, served as a public space for acts of *largesse.* The chapter also highlighted the fact writers could express the prestige of a historical court by comparing it with renowned chivalric courts in romance: works of literature were seen as representative of important values in the twelfth century.

The investigation of the ceremonial roles of court officers documented further parallels between chivalric romances and chronicles in terms of the prominence given to major office-holders, and the rivalries that existed between courtiers. The high profile enjoyed by Kay the Seneschal in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, as illustrated in Yvains's secret departure from the court in *Le Chevalier au Lion*, and the jealously-guarded privileges of Walter the Butler in Walter Map's *De nugis curialium*, reveal the inter-relation of power and honorific position at court.

While it might be assumed that criticism of the court was rhetorical, and that chivalric romances idealised the court beyond plausibility, the parallels between court satire and chivalric romances suggest that this was not the case. The study of satire of the court showed that curial satirists actually experienced rivalries at court, and passages of court satire in *Cligés* show Chrétien de Troyes echoing contemporary debates about the court.

The importance of the court in the promotion of chivalric values was finally demonstrated by the study of learning at court. This showed that the court was a forum for the teaching of chivalric ideals and activities to young noblemen. The nature of the education given to young men in chivalric romances echoes other accounts of noble education, and evidence of the learnedness of some knights is provided by chivalric romances and chronicles. In these texts the ability to read and a willingness to study are praised, and chivalry and knowledge were directly linked by some contemporary writers. The role of the court in the transfer of such knowledge can be measured concretely by considering the texts associated with the aristocratic courts and princely libraries of the twelfth century: the court was a thriving multicultural environment at which ideals of chivalry had real meaning, both politically and ideologically.

Another key institution of chivalry was the tournament. By setting anti-tournament literature against texts which celebrate tournaments, the second chapter demonstrated that chivalric romances do not portray tournaments in an idealised way, but in a way that shows their awareness of the very real debate for

and against tournaments which existed in the twelfth century. Tournaments were enjoyed by knights, and particularly encouraged by the counts of Champagne and Flanders, because of the opportunities they provided, in terms of reputation and recognition, military training, financial benefit, and also sheer physical enjoyment. Chivalric romances and chronicles portray injury and even death at tournaments, but they also revel in the glory afforded by these events. The opposition to tournaments posed by monarchs and moralists, while realistic in many ways, did not engage with this knightly point of view, and significantly the passion for tournaments was strong enough to override royal and ecclesiastical bans. In the case of tournaments, the chivalric romances provide a more realistic account of the importance of this chivalric institution to knights than accounts which criticised tournaments. The enduring popularity of tournaments in spite of regulations against them illustrates both the attractions of a chivalric pursuit and its ability to unite knights as a social group around the chivalric values of prowess, courage and honour. Moreover, even some clerics who knew perfectly well that the ecclesiastical position on tournaments was condemnatory - clerics such as Gerald of Wales and Guido de Bazoches - confessed that they found themselves irresistibly drawn to the splendours of this knightly spectacle.

Largesse was a key chivalric ideal, and the third chapter explored its fundamental ideological and economic role in society. The study of the ideology of *largesse* revealed that it was part of a contemporary debate, and discussion of its merits and its dangers highlighted its political and economic implications.

Public giving in chivalric romances and chronicles was an important political tool, which helped to confer power and status, and which forged bonds of obligation, since gifts demand counter-gifts. The reciprocal logic of gift-giving can be seen even in pious gifts by noblemen, which monks encouraged by promising treasures in heaven in return. The detailed study of cycles of gift-giving in chivalric romances, and the nature of gifts given, suggest that *largesse* was an economic necessity in the twelfth century, and that it presupposed an understanding of the need to reciprocate. At the same time it demonstrated that chivalric romances do not promote indiscriminate generosity, or ignore other economic systems, but perceive *largesse* as part of an economy of honour which was superior to the commercial concerns of the bourgeoisie.

Hospitality, another key chivalric ideal, had its roots in religious traditions. Monastic regulations specified the obligation to provide hospitality freely, while acknowledging the difficulties that could accompany such expectations. Episodes of hospitality in chivalric romances and chronicles emphasise noble hospitality as a point of chivalric honour, but also bring to light the element of display and artifice involved in an act of hospitality. Pressures of obligation, duty and politics which were involved in hospitality are vividly demonstrated in the description of the reception of the archbishop of Rheims by Count Baldwin in the *Historia comitum Ghisnensium* of Lambert of Ardres.

These chapters highlighted the social and political significance of four key chivalric institutions and ideals, and their place in contemporary clerical

debates. The study of anti-values of chivalry, or 'villainy', took this analysis further. It established that the villainous acts identified in chivalric romances and chronicles were recognised offences in twelfth-century legal practice. The episode of the cart in Chrétien de Troyes's *Chevalier de la Charrete* illustrated a striking overlap between chivalric romances and historical events, and the study of treason revealed that even in describing apparently trivial episodes of treason, chivalric romances are in fact engaging with the same issues of loyalty and oath-breaking which were the essence of historical definitions of treason. Official responses to crimes were explored in a section on punishment, which showed that actions seen as villainous in romances were dealt with seriously outside romance, and that methods of punishment in romance often closely resemble contemporary punishments.

The contextual study of representations of key aspects of chivalry has brought out a large number of parallels between texts of different genres, including chivalric romances, court satire, chronicles, and sermons. This overlap demonstrates the value of considering individual ideals and practices of chivalry in their social context and their wider textual environment, while casting doubt on the assumption that chivalric romances were unrealistic or escapist. On the contrary, chivalric romances are a valuable witness to the way in which chivalric ideals found both ideological meaning and social force in northern France in the twelfth century.

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